



VAMPIRE



SYNDICATE MAYHEM

A SET OF "AFTER" NOVELLAS



KIRA STANLEY

SYNDICATE
MAYHEM

A SET OF "AFTER" NOVELLAS

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CONTENT WARNING

Content Warning

This is a dark urban paranormal RH romance, which means the main female character doesn't have to choose a love interest. This book has dark themes, stalker vibes, adopted brother taboo, childhood trauma, death, gruesome, and bloody violent graphic scenes.

This book has graphic sex scenes (group & DVP) between consenting supernatural beings with magical bodies that are not able to get STDs or bacterial infections. Please do not think humans can make the same sexual choices without consequences.

This book is for all of you who fell in love with Rayla, Cosmo, Avery, Ax, Falcon, and Lex. Those who wanted just a peek more into their lives and how six headstrong, opinionated, and vicious beings could make their own kind of family... just in a more bloody way. :)



ACT 1

**"That's it!
Team builder time!"**

CHAPTER 1



HIS SCREAMS FILLED MY ears with a sweet melody of pain and despair ... and I loved it. The pure joy that I got when his breath turned labored, when his skin jumped as one of us got closer to him, when sweat started to bead along his forehead. All of it was like a beautiful symphony of pain and revenge.

I watched my wolf mate shove his hand into the deep incision he made, digging his hand into our victim's gut like he was searching for gold. "You don't need this, right?" He ripped out something, crushing whatever it was in his hand and threw it behind him with a splat like it was nothing.

Vincent's broken sobs were so delicious I licked my lips. There was something about having my wolf mate shirtless, covered in blood, with Gucci slacks and matching shoes, torturing our enemy, that was mouthwateringly sexy.

The grump in the corner huffed out under his breath. "You know, you should've made a horizontal and vertical cut if you wanted to maximize the pain."

Ax growled out at Cosmo, his eyes alight with bloodlust, but the frown that took over his savage smile meant he was not in the mood for Cosmo's critiques. "Back off, blood sucker,

before I start carving you up instead.” Cosmo’s eyes narrowed to the point of slits, and I knew he was about to go further.

I laughed, trying to cut the tension in the room, but all that did was bring all that hostile attention onto me. Both men stopped, turning toward me with those lifted brows and expectant eyes. I have grown used to these looks over the past six months, the guys fighting, wanting me to step in between and pick a side. I was not about to play that game, oh hell no. I learned the hard way that I was never going to do that again. They found my damn weakness and used it against me. These mates of mine were assholes and held sexual grudges like brutal beasts.

I shrugged my shoulders, rolling my eyes, “No comment.” I nodded toward Vincent. “I just wanted a show before the run tonight.” I moved to stand up with a sigh. “If you can’t do that, then I guess I need to get my kicks from somewhere else.” I tilted my head like I was thinking. “Maybe Avery? I think I could convince him to do a private dance for me later.”

We all knew that was just a hook to get them to stop fighting. A small threat as I was getting tired of the macho fights they were pulling. It had been happening more and more between my mates lately, and I didn’t know how to solve it.

Cosmo was the first to give in, closing his eyes, taking a deep inhale before he flicked open his favorite switch blade and stabbed Vincent in the stomach, yanking his arm up to get a deep vertical cut across Ax’s horizontal one. Vincent grunted, his eyes widening at the swift pain he was not expecting. Cosmo then flicked his wrist as he yanked the knife out and sprayed Ax’s chest with blood.

My senses lit up at the fresh smell of blood. My nose flaring as my skin shivered. I licked my lips as my eyes zeroed in on the blood.

I salivated as I watched fat beads of blood wind its way down Ax’s chiseled chest, making my tongue tingle with the need to lick up his chest. My eyes flicked to Cosmo, and I was greeted with his knowing smirk. Cosmo knew just what I needed to get my mind off their fighting and switched to something else.

He knew I had a weakness for violence, blood, and sexy men ... and my mates were too damn sexy for me to focus on anything else. I was quickly leaning toward turning this torture session into a fuck session. I wanted to start things off by licking up Ax's chest as his dick grew so hard that I couldn't ignore it. It was a great idea until I remembered how my mates get all testy when I ingest blood from others. Plus, I was sure that Vincent's blood was going to be like acid in my mouth. My lips pinched in disappointment as I crossed my arms and forced myself to look away in a huff. Cosmo's smirk deepened.

"Did you need a turn, Siren?" Ax's concerned question reminded me he saw my pout session, not understanding what Cosmo was trying to tease me with. Well, two can play at that game.

"No." I got up, gave Ax a sinful, dirty smile as I clicked my way over to him in my red stilettos. I ran my hands along the grooves of his six pack, looked down at his pants as I licked my lips, watched as his bulge grew. "I think I enjoyed watching you too much. I'm getting naughty, naughty thoughts." I dug my nails in, creating my own red line along his body. His honeyed eyes lit up in hunger as his breath hitched, a sharp inhale of my scent lighting him up hard and fast.

I turned my eyes away from him as I smiled down at Vincent, ignoring Cosmo's combo of crossed arms and turned down lips. Vincent's body was strung up in magical chains by his broken wrists, making every move he made a painful, whole body experience. "That was one thing you were right about, Vinny boy. I am a crazy, psycho bitch." I laughed when his head turned away from me, keeping his eyes on the ground and not engaging with me.

We had been taking turns playing with him since we took him down, and he quickly learned that if he spoke about me, looked at me, even huffed at something I said, my mates would make everything much more painful. Making him associate pain when it had anything to do with me.

All of us wanted revenge for him robbing us of our moms, but we also wanted payback for him smacking me around while we were powerless. Oh, and maybe that whole threatening to rape me. Yeah. The guys did not like that very much. They're not going to forget about that anytime soon.

I saw Vincent take a relaxed breath and rage immediately filled me. Red hot fury overtook all my senses, taking over my body as I backhanded him so fast that even Ax's arms tightened around me in surprise. I turned fully around in Ax's arms, bending over at the hips to whisper in Vincent's ear, "You are *never* allowed to take a peaceful breath. Never allowed to have a moment of strength. A moment to recover. You will spend the rest of your existence in here learning what it really means to feel the wrath of the Syndicate." He let out a small, desperate-sounding sob before I lifted my foot and stabbed him in the calf with the heel of my stiletto. The pain was too much and took him over the edge as he slumped in a passed-out state.

I removed my foot as I straightened up. "Well, that's a bummer ... I'm sorry, guys." I didn't mean to end this session too soon, but my rage just boiled over, and nothing was going to stop me at that point.

My eyes roamed over Vincent's naked body, cataloging the wounds and how long they would take to heal. He was either lucky or unlucky, depending on how you looked at it, that he was a demon and had some self-healing abilities.

Big, strong hands roamed around my backside greedily as a husky voice growled out, "Oh, I think I'm okay, Siren." A breathy moan followed before his arm snaked around my middle, pulling my body as close to his as possible. His lips barely touched the edge of my ear as he whispered, "I know of a way that you can make it up to me." His rough hands and soft words were turning me on faster than a faucet. My body practically trembled in anticipation. Plus, there was something about fucking in front of a passed out, blood-covered enemy that just did it for me.

His steel pipe of a dick rubbed between my cheeks before he smacked my ass hard, and I let out a surprised cry. His hands

landed on the sides of my bare thighs, turning his fingers into claws as he worked his way up, leaving thin bloody marks that balanced out his nuzzling, wet, hot kisses on my neck.

I smirked up at Cosmo, reminding him that I not only gave as good as I got, but I did it better. I wove my hand behind, sinking my fingers into that lush, silky hair before I fisted it and yanked it back, causing Ax's voice to hitch just as his claws dug in at the hem of my red mini dress.

I called out, staring deep into Cosmo's violet orbs that tracked my every move with fervor. "No shredding the clothes tonight. I just bought this dress, and I want to wear it out."

I gave him a small peck on the cheek as Ax huffed against my neck, his cock digging for gold between my ass cheeks. A wide smile took over my face as I saw Cosmo's eyes twitch, looking down to see Ax lifting my dress. I watched as my vampire mate's face changed from steel to hunger as he saw I was going commando, and his chest began to rise and fall to the beating of my heart.

My wolf's hands wrapped around front, wrapping his claws around my heavy breasts as he pinched at my pebbled nipples. I bit my lip in a closed mouth moan.

He knows that my nipples are like my on button. As soon as someone plays with them, I get drenched, ready to take this playing to the next level. I ground my ass into Ax as I gave Cosmo my come-fuck-me eyes.

His hands were balled into fists as he watched us, still not making a move, but I had about enough of that. "Are you going to just stand there and watch us fuck or are you going to join in?"

Ax had always been the one that I thought would have the most trouble sharing, just because he was the greedy kind, but he surprised me when his hands let go of my breasts and gripped the backs of my thighs. Taking only a second to lift me up and spread me wide for Cosmo's eyes to feast on my pulsing pussy.

Ax growled into my hair as he kissed the space below my ear, “Get over here and pleasure our mate. It seems like she is going to need a lot of attention today.”

Like a hunting dog set off his leash, Cosmo stalked over to me. His normally bright violet eyes took on a dark eggplant tone as he licked his lips, his voice a rough whisper. “Oh, I’ll be happy to, just as soon as I get what’s mine.”

Without taking his eyes off me, he kneeled right in front of me, his face an inch away from my center. My instincts called for me to thrust forward, to get that mouth as close to me as I could, but Ax’s grip was like iron, keeping me at bay ... that was until I felt Cosmo’s fangs slide into my thigh, and he took his first drag of my blood.

It was euphoric, having him drink from me, taking my life force and using it to strengthen himself. There was this sense of give and take, even as he was the one slurping at my blood. I leaned my head back onto Ax’s shoulder, trying to catch my breath, when I felt two fingers shoved up into me, and I opened my mouth in a silent cry.

A growled voice broke through my thoughts. “That’s right, mate. While we might disagree about some things, the one common ground seems to be you. The only goal being to see you crumble in ruin as we wring out every last drop of that sweet cum out of you. We want it all, mate, and we’re going to get it. Right, Cosy?”

Avery, Lex, and Ax liked to tease him with the nickname I gave him when we were kids, but it didn’t seem to bother him anymore. His reply was to move his thumb and flick that bundle of nerves as he continued to fuck me with his fingers, sucking hard at my thigh.

I let out a whimper, enjoying what was happening almost too much. Feeling that overwhelming sense of pleasure. Ax let out a dark chuckle as he dug his face into my hair, sniffing it. “Oh, I love when you make that noise, Siren. It makes me want to do even naughtier things with you.”

Before I could shoot off the next thing on my mind, my right thigh dropped as I heard a zipper unzipping, and a growly

voice barked, “Keep going, Cosmo.” That was all the warning any of us got before Ax shoved his cock into my pussy, right alongside Cosmo’s fingers, and lifted my thigh back up to get the angle he wanted.

I could feel Cosmo’s pause, his fingers stopping as Ax made room for himself, bottomed out inside of me like he had all the room in the world. My hand gripped onto Ax’s hair, about to rip it from his scalp, as he stretched me fast and hard. The pain was just what I needed from that overload of pleasure. I was panting hard as my other hand gripped Cosmo, letting him know I wanted him to stay where he was at. The duality drove me wild.

I felt his acceptance of the situation as his fingers started to move along with Ax, slowly working me wider. Taking me into consideration when Ax’s thrusts grew faster. Cosmo’s fangs slid out as he licked and kissed my thigh wounds closed.

“Anything for you,” Cosmo whispered along my thigh before he threw it over his shoulder and his tongue swept along my vertical smile. I shuddered, moaning out loud as he worked his tongue to bring me higher.

Ax’s hands moved to my waist, lifting me up and down his cock as he moaned about how wet I was getting with Cosmo lapping at my center, driving me insane with need. I needed more. I wanted to be filled so full my mind shut off as my soul left my body.

Like he heard my thoughts, I heard more unzipping as Cosmo stood. Ax slowed down, keeping himself fully inside of me as Cosmo cupped my face, placing his forehead against mine. I felt the silky head of his cock positioning next to Ax.

“Rayla, look at me.” My eyes snapped to him, and he smiled. “I want to see your eyes roll back into your head as I enter you. I want you to know that it’s me that’s stretching you so wide you feel like you’re going to break. Then your wolf mate and I are going to fill you so full, fucking you so hard, that you’re going to want to pass out, but we won’t let you. We

want you to feel it all, Ray. Every bloody inch of our fat cocks fucking your tight, perfect pussy.”

With his speech practically bringing me to tears, he pushed himself inside. My arms circled around Cosmo’s neck as Ax grunted and tightened his grip on my thighs, but that was all the noise he made at Cosmo’s entrance. For a second, it was both of them inside of me, stretching me out so wide I felt like they were splitting me open. My breathing was harsh, and my body was wound up tight, but then they started to move, and I knew they were going to take me there. Take me to the point of a massive, toe-curling, blackout-inducing orgasm.

They began to work me in tandem, almost like a see-saw. One of them fully in, while the other was pulling out, dragging those movements to create delicious friction and anticipation. Working it so my body easily spreads all my wetness around, lubing myself up for the next step.

It went on like this for a little bit. Ax’s face on one side, huffing as he kissed my neck, the grip on my thighs bruising as his fingers dug into my skin, moaning every time he was fully inside of me. Cosmo kept one hand on his dick, controlling his movements as he watched my reactions, my nails creating crescent marks on his shoulders as his other hand squeezed my waist. His focus solely on me as he warned me, “Ready, Ray?”

Before I could ask him for what, he switched his timing to match Ax, and I had both of them bottoming out into me at the same time. This time, I screamed out, “Oh, fuck! Fuck! Cosmo! Ax! Fucking Hell!”

Ax chuckled. “Na, siren, we’re in heaven right now.”

I nodded, letting out a gasping sigh, unable to speak as they fucked me together, stretching me so wide I didnt know what to think about anymore. My eyes rolled into the back of my head as they kept hitting that spot inside that made my body sing. The only anchor I had left in this world was Cosmo’s forehead on mine and Ax’s moans in my ear behind me. If I could focus on those two things, then I could get to my mind-blowing orgasm I was desperate for.

My body shook as they sped up, both of them thrusting up into me with a renewed urgency. I let go of control, letting my body go lax as I was simply along for the ride.

A familiar heat grew in my belly, the coiling of my orgasm building with each thrust, each moan, every moment their skin touched mine.

I opened the door to our bond, letting them feel everything that I was feeling, and they both cried out. “Oh, fuck, Siren. I can never get enough of this.” Ax’s teeth sank into my skin, marking me as he bit down on my shoulder, and my eyes closed, enjoying the connection.

“This is everything.” Cosmo’s breathy whisper huffed across my neck, feeling his desperation and need from his words. All of this pushed me over the edge as I lifted my chin to scream my pleasure into the sky, to let everyone know how good I was feeling.

Their hips both jerked, growling out right after me. Ropes of cum splashed inside of me, filling me so full it started to leak out, dripping down my thighs. Signifying the glorious mess we just made with each other.

I sighed out in pure bliss at the feeling. I was beginning to learn that I liked the feeling of their cum leaking out of me. Running down my thighs, marking me as theirs.

Unable to do anything more, I slumped forward against Cosmo, his arms wrapped around me tightly as we all stayed connected like this for a second. Just long enough for our heart rates to go back to normal.

Ax laid soft kisses along my spine as Cosmo whispered to me how beautiful I was. How watching me cum was a high all its own for him. How every time was just as amazing as the last, and he could never get enough of me.

I didn’t have the strength to tell him all those pretty words back, all I was able to say was, “You win,” before a familiar darkness took over, and I slumped into my mates, drunk on satisfaction.

CHAPTER 2



“HERE YOU GO, DARLING.” The cup of bloody cocoa Lisa just made for me clinked onto the counter in front of me as my phone buzzed.

“Thanks, Lisa. You’re the best!” I picked up my phone as I took my first sip of that sweet, coppery taste that hit the spot in the early evenings. I looked down and saw Falcon had sent a text though the group chat.

Falcon: *New Problem. War room in 30 mins. All in attendance.*

I smiled at his short but to the point text. I had so many questions, but I already knew that he wouldn’t answer them until we were all in the war room. It was both adorable and annoying.

Nodding to Lisa as I climbed off the stool, “Duty calls. I’ll be in the war room if anyone is looking for me.”

Lisa smiled wide as she was at the stove stirring something in a large pot. “I’ll have a coffee tray sent up. I know the boys will need it if you’re starting your night in the war room.”

I made a yuck face as I kicked the swinging door open. “I’m sure they’ll appreciate it.” I’ll never understand why anyone would want that bitter tasting tar in their mouth when you

could have the sweet high that cocoa gives you, but the boys loved the stuff.

Zooming up the stairs, I was the first one in the war room, which meant that I got to pick my seat first. I made a beeline for the head seat and hunkered down to wait for the others. Rick ended up finding me and gave me the projections for our fourth quarter earnings for the casino side of the business.

After the dust settled and the Devil's clan was reestablished and running smoothly, all our dad's decided to back off and let us start running the ship, telling people that they had retired and are living a life of torturing Vincent and hanging out with their friends. They also occasionally butt into our lives and rain down havoc, but it was nice to see my dad loosen up a little. To have his friends around and not be so lonely while I spend all my time with my mates.

While the guys and I took over the Desmond compound, the dads each took over one of the villas, officially taking residence. It was the only compromise that mine and Avery's dad would agree to, with the two others not caring enough to argue. They wanted to stay close, but knew they needed to give us space. Apparently walking distance was the farthest they wanted to go. So Manic and Easton would convince the others to take small trips, making appearances at some of the other Syndicate hubs in America. Reminding the fringes why they needed to stay in line.

Syris and my dad started to enjoy this so much they decided to take a trip to Europe, visit some of their old stomping grounds. When I said they "decided", I meant that my dad and Syris badgered Manic and Easton incessantly, day and night, into going. Which was why they were all currently on a plane to England, giving me and the boys a good long breather.

I took another sip of my cocoa and smiled at the sugary warmth that filled my throat when the door flew open, and my pink-haired fairy mate stomped across the room. His hair was flying every which way, and his normally impeccable suit was all wrinkled as he flopped into the seat next to me. Scooting closer to me, he sighed, laying his head on the papers in front

of me and whined, “It’s so hard to be away from you. I hate it. I hate going back to New York, and I used to love that city.”

I laughed, not even trying to tug the papers out from under him because I had learned that was not the way Avery worked. He wanted attention, lots of it, and until he got it, I would not be able to get any work done. It reminded me of someone else I knew, but if I mentioned that, he would be in a sour mood all day, so I kept my mouth shut.

Bending down, I kissed his cheek and whispered in his ear, “I missed you, too.” Running my fingers through his lustrous pink hair, he sighed in relief.

While we’ve only been technically together for six months, I felt like we’ve all been getting used to the routine and changes of our daily lives.

Right now, Ax was most likely finishing up his morning workout. Cosmo was making the compound security rounds and asking for the daytime reports. Lex just flew in early this morning from a job and was taking his normal power nap, because that man apparently doesn’t sleep all night unless he’s next to me. Avery just landed from his monthly trip to New York, trying to set things up so that it can run smoothly without him.

Falcon did the same thing in Dallas, but since it was all more of a secret lab and warehouse kind of thing, it took only one trip to make the necessary changes and to move the things he wanted to the Vegas lab.

Ax was still in the same boat as Avery, trying to get the right people in place up in Montana before moving all of his stuff down. It was nice that they both staggered their visits because I would most definitely complain a lot more if they both were gone.

“Where’s your stupid shadow? I thought he was already back.” I tightened my hand on his hair at calling one of my mates stupid, but his cranky voice had me taking a deep breath before I responded.

“Hey, no name calling. And he is back. Came in a few hours ago, and I convinced him that he needed to get a couple hours of sleep.” He huffed but didn’t say anything more, moving his hand on my thigh for comfort. I knew he was tired and grumpy from the plane ride, but that was no reason for him to take it out on Lex.

I loved all of them equally. As much as a girl with five possessive, obsessive, and broody mates could.

He turned his head to face me. “I want to sleep with you tonight. I don’t care who’s on the other side, but I need some cuddle time with you.” He slipped his hand between my thighs as his head slid forward, and buried his face between my breasts.

My breath hitched as I felt his fingers touch my sensitive nub. In a flash, he was out of his seat, wings out on display as he leaned into me, causing the back of my chair to tip back as far as it could go. His eyes flashed with a kaleidoscope of colors as he moved his wings to circle around us, causing our own little cocoon.

With my eyes stuck to his beautiful, iridescent wings, his lips found my neck as he rubbed his fingers in circles between my legs. “Touch them, fierce girl. They’re much more fun to touch than just stare at.”

I lifted my hand, starting at the base where his wings met his back, and traced a line down them. Avery shuddered as a soft moan slipped from his lips across my shoulder. “Rayla. Fuck. Please. Let me fuck you. Let me fuck you as you play with my wings, and I promise I will take you for another aerial sexcapade.”

That flooded my mind with all of the ideas I’ve been wanting to try. I flicked my fang with my tongue as I spread my legs wider. “Well then-”

A cool, sharp voice cut through the lust building between us, “The rule was that there was no fornication in the war room. It’s a room for business.”

Avery sighed and slumped his head against my shoulder as he lowered his wing. “Fucking Winstale.” I chuckled against his neck, giving him a small kiss below his jaw. He groaned, his body tightening, hunkering down as if he was not about to give up his position. Falcon’s face pinched, taking a step just as Ax came in, hair wet from his shower.

“Oh, are we having a ‘fuck Rayla on the conference room table’ party?” He licked his lips, hands rubbing together as he looked around the room while Falcon’s eyes narrowed on mine. I winked at him. Placing my hand on Avery’s back, I eyed Falcon as I whispered in Avery’s ear.

“With how Falcon is staring at us, I think he has come up with a way to make himself have laser eyes. Let’s live long enough for you to stay in my bed tonight. I want you to keep your promise.”

He licked the shell of my ear, whispered, “It’s a date,” then slouched in the chair next to me. His normally jolly smile was strained as he laughed through his teeth. “All right. What’s so damn important?”

Ax slipped past Falcon as he was having a staring match with Avery, snagging the spot on the other side of me before Falcon could. Ax quickly pulled my hand in his, giving it a kiss. “Morning, Siren. You look good enough to eat. I wish the stick in the mud wouldn’t have interrupted, then I could’ve found my in while the fairy was distracted.” I giggled because what else could I do when someone was that honest?

Falcon frowned as he deliberately sat down next to Avery, tablet in hand as he flicked his fingers across the screen. “Yes, setting rules for us when you band of brutes continuously try to occupy Rayla for frivolous reasons makes me a “stick in the mud”. Get over it.”

“Frivolous?!” Avery gasped. “I hope you know that what I do to make her scream like she’s a banshee taking down this house has nothing to do with frivolity.”

Cosmo walked in, glaring at the seating arrangement, but that’s what happens when you don’t get here early. Cosmo stomped his way over to my side, turned me in my chair and

gave me a kiss full of tongue and longing. I melted like warm chocolate in my chair, wanting more, but I knew if I got it, I would be useless. “Good morning, Ray.” He tucked some hair back behind my ear before moving to the chair next to Ax.

“Show off,” Ax grumbled.

Ax was not the most romantic guy, and I noticed that if any of the guys did something more on the romantic side, he would make some kind of negative comment. At first, it didn’t bother me, but now it’s starting to rub me the wrong way.

“Hey! Showing off for me is always welcome and appreciated.” I winked at Cosmo, licking my lips as I cooed, “I think Cosmo should be on my other side tonight.” Ax’s mouth dropped open, about to complain, when Avery scoffed.

“Should’ve kept your big mouth shut, and then you would’ve had a chance.” Ax growled across the table at Avery’s words, and I about had enough.

I put two fingers in my mouth and whistled. “All right, guys. Stop. Falcon called us here to talk about something important.” I nodded to him to get going. If we had to wait any longer, these guys were going to start fighting again.

There were a few times that fists had flown, and it ended in a dog pile of guys punching and kicking, but I soon put my foot down and told them that if they continued like that, I would put them outside like dogs they were acting like. That got them to quit fist fighting real fast, but these underhanded jabs at each other were getting annoying.

“I’m still waiting for-” Falcon started, but Lex was at the door, shutting it behind him before he could finish.

Lex smiled brightly as he saw me, practically running to my side when he swiveled my chair and lifted me up for a bear hug. I instinctively wrapped my arms and legs around him, squeezing tightly.

He buried his nose into my hair. “Mmmm, fuck you smell so good. I want to devour you, my rose.” His hands started to drift down, his fingertips gripping my ass like I was trying to get away when I was only trying to get closer to him. “Fuck.

Next job, I think you should come with. You can play with the target until you get bored, and then we can split them apart and fuck in their pool of blood.”

Wetness pooled in my pants as I pictured the scene he described. He knew I would never turn down an offer like that. “Oh, fuck yeah!”

Lex’s hundred watt smile was so bright it almost blinded me. Lex had this way of capturing my full attention, making it feel like we were the only two people in the room with the way his eyes would devour me. It was intoxicating.

“Now that we are all here, we can talk about the problem we are having with the mayor.” Falcon did it again and threw ice cold water on my reunion with my demon mate.

I let go of Lex, hearing him cuss under his breath, giving me a longing gaze before he went to an available seat, knowing that I was now in Rayla Desmond boss mode.

“What the fuck do you mean we have a problem with the mayor? I just sent him some money for a library to be named after his idiot son.” My hands clenched, and my muscles grew taut. I was not the one to try and take advantage of.

I was already pissed about the whole deal I made with the mayor. He wanted to launch a big investigation into his son’s death, which he insisted was murder and not suicide like the paperwork said. He was convinced that it was someone in the paranormal community, no proof of course. He said it was just his gut feeling. His conclusion was that because it was done so professionally, it had to be someone from the Syndicate.

I assured him that this wasn’t the case. That even though I did talk to him the night of his death, which he could clearly see on the cameras in Club X, I had left Tre alive and well. The only hint it was someone from the paranormal community was the blur spell in place to block the face of the person who left with Tre.

I talked to him for hours, going around in circles with him until I convinced him that naming something important, something that would last the test of time and would help him

and others, commemorate Tre's life, and not dwell on his death. I offered to pay for the local library name to be changed and dedicated in his name. Saying that this will show that even if Tre and I had broken up, that we still had a strong bond and wanted the local community to know it. He wept in my office, telling me that he wished it worked out between us, that maybe if it had he wouldn't have been messing with the wrong crowd. I nodded as I kept my mouth shut, but what the possible fuck could he want from me now?

"Yes, well, I guess that wasn't enough for him because he hired some spirit mage in Europe that told him it was a demon who killed his son." Falcon turned his head to Lex, who simply grinned back.

Lex had fessed up as soon as it made the news that he was the one who did it. He said that he killed him because he didn't like his face and wanted it gone from this Earth, but I think he really did it because he knew that Tre betrayed me. I wasn't really that mad about it at the time, thinking it was actually kinda romantic. Plus, I also knew that if he didn't do it, Cosmo would've eventually, since he apparently 'took care' of all my other dalliances. I sighed and put my chin on my hands in frustration. This was why I didn't want them to kill him in the first place, all this shit storm for one idiot mistake of a dick.

"Sorry, not sorry." He looked around the room and shrugged. I sighed as I sat back, trying to think of a new way to get out of all this.

Falcon nodded before he continued, almost like he was in silent agreement with Lex. "While Lex's choice was idiotic and irresponsible-

A knife landed with a thud right in front of Falcon's tablet, Lex's shadows slowly building around him as he glared at Falcon. "Next time, I won't miss," the threat was clear.

"Hey, gu-," I started, but Falcon barreled through my words.

"Did I say anything that was incorrect? From where I'm standing, you're only making more messes for us to clear up. There was a reason she told us not to kill him. Her foresight in this situation is impeccable."

While he didn't look at me when he gave me the compliment, I will say that I tried to hide my smile in my hands. It was so cute when he was complimenting me. The only thing that ruined it was his backhanded diss to Lex, who was currently trembling with rage.

I needed to defuse the situation before it got out of hand. "Guys, why do-"

"I mean, Falcon's not wrong. It was a reckless and a stupid move to kill the mayor's son, especially when he has money to burn on a smear campaign of the Syndicate." Lex's face darkened at Avery's smug tone, his eyes narrowing on Avery's throat.

This needed to stop before his anger boiled over. "Avery," my voice was coarse and low, putting it into boss mode, "that was uncalled for. Plus, it's not like I care that he's dead." I winked at Lex. I had to admit, I had a soft spot for my little psycho stalker.

"Be that as it may, if he showed himself a little sooner, then the whole thing could've been prevented." Ax grumbled, still sore at Lex for his part in Vincent's plan to take over the Syndicate and kill our dads.

I was moments away from telling them all to quit it when a pair of swirling violet eyes caught mine, and Cosmo interrupted. "What's done is done. There's no reason to persecute for the past. What we need to do is figure out what we're going to do with the mayor now."

The whole room fell silent, most of us lost in thought when Lex blurted out, "I'm just going to be the one who says it. Why can't we just kill him?"

All four of my other mates turned to look at me, eyes narrowed and accusing, like they were blaming me for his question. I couldn't help when my lips twitched as I tried to keep them in a straight line. Lex saw my struggle, leaned against the table with a jackal of a smile.

"What?" I exclaimed to the rest of their frowning faces. I shifted to my elbows as I mumbled to myself. "I don't hate the

idea,” but to be fair, I was more of the stab first kind of girl as a default.

Falcon shook his head as he looked down at his tablet, clicking away. “While it is not impossible to orchestrate a political assassination, there is no way we won’t get blowback.” He turned his tablet, showing us an article with the headlines, ‘Grieving Human Mayor Tries to Blame Largest Paranormal Group for Son’s Suicide.’

“It’s easier to spin that he’s just a grieving human looking for someone to blame than having him drop dead, making us look like the suspect.” It was hard to explain away that kind of logic. Everyone nodded in agreement but Lex, who rolled his eyes and slumped onto the table to pout.

I was about to ask what Falcon’s plan was, knowing he already thought of a few, when he glared at Lex, and in a frosty voice, asked, “What is your problem now?”

Lex sat up, giving his false smile while his eyes hardened. “Look, we’re a criminal organization. Hiring some PR company or whatever you’re thinking seems like the bitch way out. Just saying.”

Growing up in a criminal family as the only girl, I was used to the fighting, the showboating, the annoying little cuts and digs that men made to each other. They liked to boast that it builds character or a rapport with others, but I found it agitating.

Before I could tell them all to play nice, again, Falcon’s whole body grew ridged as he said, “Well, that’s understandable for you. You don’t have the background for this kind of problem. Some of us have been trained to be the heads of our organizations and to think of its well-being first over our pride.”

My mouth dropped open. Not once had any of them gone that far with each other. Not once had they blatantly disrespected one another.

Lex kicked out his chair, swirling smoke all around him as the shadows in the room bent toward him. Falcon glared at Lex, not getting out of his seat, but looks could be deceiving. I saw

his fingers twitch as air flowed between his fingers. He may not look it, but he was ready for a fight.

“That’s it!” I yelled, slamming my hands so hard on the table that my cocoa jumped, landed on its side, and spilled all over the table. “Fucking shit!” I threw my hands up, glaring at both Lex and Falcon, who’s eyes were now on me.

“No.” I pointed to Lex. “No.” I pointed to Falcon. “No!” I wagged my finger at the rest of them. “I have had enough of your fighting, the little cutting remarks, backhanded comments, and the blatant disrespect for an *equal partner* in this organization.” I scowled at Falcon at that last part, who at least had the decency to take a breath and lower his gaze to the table.

“I don’t have the time or the want to constantly remind you all that we are a unit. We are fucking *family* now. Now and forever. It’s us against the world!” I growled as I bent over and snatched my mug off the floor, grabbed at my papers, and flew to the door. “When you all remember that shit, come find me.” Then I yanked the door open and slammed it shut.

I ran to our room at lightning speed, paced in front of my bed, trying to think of a solution. Something quick and lasting. Then an idea came to me. A way to bring them all together as the unit I needed them to be. It was weird and crazy, unorthodox, but it might just work. I yanked my phone out of my pocket and dialed Rick.

“Rayla Desmond’s answering and man servant service.”

I smirked at his condescending tone. “Well, as long as you know it.” I heard him gasp through the phone, and it made me giggle.

“Look. Before you get into a whole thing, I need your help with something, and you can’t tell the guys about it. Got it?”

His voice went up in excitement. “Oh, my god! A secret Ray and Rick mission. I’m ready, boss. This is the shit I live for.”

“Remember you said that after shit hits the fan.” I smirked as I started to whisper my idea.

CHAPTER 3



A CRAMP LIKE PAIN pinched at my back, waking me up in the worst way possible. “Oh, fuck. We are getting new fucking couches,” mumbling to myself as I rubbed my back.

Last night, Rayla said that she was going to work late and to not wait up for her. After how pissed she was after the meeting, and how closed off the bond was, I knew she was a little pissed about the whole war room thing. So, I tried to wait up for her but fell asleep waiting.

Apparently, I wasn't the only one.

Loud snoring sounds came from across the coffee table. I looked over to see Ax splayed along the other couch, half naked face up. That fucker could sleep anywhere, but I was surprised when I saw Falcon, eyes closed, in the sofa chair next to him. Usually, he was coming back from or already left for the lab by now, but here he was, arms crossed, head tilted with a line of drool along his face.

I grabbed my phone and took a picture of this momentous occasion. There was no way he was going to live this down. Not after we all learned how much of a perfectionist he was. I think he would burn my phone if he knew I had this. I sent it to the cloud just in case.

A twinge of my back muscles had me spreading my wings, stretching out. It felt like I was in the dog house, and I did not like it.

Once we came back from the big showdown with Vincent; Falcon, Ax, Lex, and I decided to move into the Desmond compound. None of us could even attempt to be separated from her for long, and she was more than happy to oblige. Rayla came up with the idea to knock down some walls between her and Cosmo's rooms and made a whole mega room for all of us. It was massive with six different sections with closets for each of us. A new bathroom with four different shower heads, a six person jacuzzi tub, and a double vanity with three sinks on each side. One for each of us.

Then there was the bed situation.

It was made very clear, after a few tries, that sleeping in one big bed together was not for this group. Ax moved a lot in his sleep. Lex only took power naps and would just stare at Rayla all day instead of sleeping, which creeped the rest of us out, keeping us up. Rayla, on the other hand, didn't seem to mind as much, go figure. Falcon didn't like too much body heat while he slept, and Cosmo was a light sleeper and would wake up whenever anyone moved. I liked to sleep on silk sheets only, it helped with the chaffing for the wings, but apparently, that was a deal breaker for some.

That's why we ended up having our own smaller beds in our sections, all of us but Rayla. She got an upgraded ginormous bed that fit all of us. Most nights, we rotated on who could sleep on either side of her, which worked out for the most part since we all had busy schedules now that we were bosses, but it was an unspoken rule that if we were going to all fuck, it would be in Rayla's bed. She never minded. Which was why, even though she didn't throw us out of the room, it felt like it when she decided to work in her office all night.

I hated it. I didn't like this feeling of disconnect from her, especially when I just came back into town, which made me feel a little lost. My heart hurt from the separation. I rubbed at my chest absently, but I didn't know how to fix it. How to make it right again.

A familiar fatherly voice broke me from my internal pity party. “Is that my son on the couch? What the hell did you do?! It’s not good that you’re already in the dog house during your honeymoon period.” My father tsked, and my eyes flew open to see him on the big screen tv right in front of me.

Behind my father, I could see flashes of the other fathers ... well, I guess they would be my soon to be father-in-laws ... *right?* My father was holding the phone too close to his face, arguing with whoever was behind him, and the phone shook as someone was trying to take it away.

“Ha! They’re not married until I see my little girl in a dress walking down an aisle. As it stands now, they’re just playing house!” Ternin’s voice took over the speaker as they fought over who should hold the phone.

“Ternin,” I tried to use a light tone as I replied to his common complaint. “We told you that we’ll get to that as soon as we’re more settled in our positions. With you all stepping down and us relocating, we want to have everything solid before we put focus on such a big event.” I looked to the side to see Falcon leaning against the wall the TV was on, making sure he was out of the shot, his phone being the one plugged into the TV. So this little impromptu conference call was his fault.

“Oh, so now you’re trying to blame us for not becoming her husbands?” I turned back to the TV, opening my mouth to respond, but he beat me to the punch. “Well, let me tell you this, *boy*, it’s not official until you put a ring on it Well, I guess five rings. His face scrunched up as he looked to the ceiling and tapped his chin, “Have you guys figured out how that’s going to work? Is it going to be a ring on each finger of her left hand or five rings on the same finger? Don’t you think that will affect her punching with the additional weight?”

Falcon rolled his eyes, arms crossed as he kept quiet while Ternin went on one of his tangents. Like he was waking up from the dead, Ax jackknifed up, mumbling out, half awake, “Oh, god, I think I was having a nightmare. Syris and Ternin were complaining incessantly.”

I had enough, and I threw a pillow at his head to wake him up. “What the fuck, Avery?!”

I smirked as he glared, and I pointed at the TV. “It’s not a nightmare, idiot.”

He slowly turned his head to see his father this time, frowning like he normally was. “Really, son? You also were kicked out? What the hell are you boys doing over there? Having a fucking sleep over?” This time, Ax growled, throwing a pillow at Falcon, who dodged it easily.

Falcon whispered, looking at the TV to make sure he wasn’t in the frame. “It wasn’t like I had a choice. My father called, and by the time I picked up, Syris was on the other side threatening to set a paint bomb off in my lab.” He visually shivered, a slight panic laced his eyes, and I couldn’t blame him.

My father was the first one to do and say weird, outlandish things for attention, but if you didn’t give in to him, he would follow through. He claimed he was a “free spirit”, but it was more of a spirit of chaos.

Their phone dropped, growls and curses followed as we watched hands fumbling with the phone until my father’s face came in clear, and he looked like he was holding out the phone and running down a hallway.

“Syris! Bring it back!” Sounded in the background, and he was grinning ear to ear.

He quickly huffed, “Soooo here’s what you need to do to makeup. Since that girl has a sweet tooth, one of you,” he tilted his head to the side in thought, “maybe all of you, need to dip your dick-”

“Nope! Not dealing with this first thing in the morning!” I grabbed the remote, seconds away from turning it off, Ax sighing in relief as he laid back down.

“Is that my daddy?” Rayla appeared out of thin air, standing behind us, facing the TV, smiling widely as she saw who it was. Lex and Cosmo were next to her, both looking freshly showered. Damn early risers.

My father's face lit up just as he was shoved into a wall, and the phone dropped. Ternin picked up the phone. "Yes, Sunshine, it's me! Now, tell me what these boys have done, and I can get them all castrated by the end of the night." *What the fuck?! Why was he smiling so wide about that?*

She laughed, her eyes twinkled like rosey gems, arms crossed and hip cocked. She looked freaking gorgeous, hair glossy and flowing, skin dewy and fresh, dressed in leather pants and a red corset top. She looked like a Syndicate goddess while I felt like a troll. Ugh, I needed a shower.

"Oh, nothing that I can't handle on my own. Also, castration would be a last resort. I enjoy that appendage too much." Ternin's face scrunched up in disgust.

"Rayla Desmond!"

She pointed her finger at him as she charged the TV. "Don't bring it up if you can't handle it. That was your fault." You could hear my father and Manic laughing in the background, poking fun at Ternin and saying she was right.

She shook her head and huffed, looking around the room with wide eyes for the first time. "Why did you guys sleep down here?"

The whole room went still as all eyes turned toward her. Lex leaned forward, whispering in her ear like they just finished fucking. "I think that had to do with you saying you would be working all night. We all seemed to think that this meant you were upset with us."

Her eyes went wide. "Ooooooh! So that's why you've been in front of my office all night." She puffed out a laugh as she turned her head, cupping his face as she whispered along his cheek, "I just thought you were being a little clingy again. You tend to do that after you have been away on a job."

You could see his whole body shiver as he smiled at the attention he was getting. His face crafted into the perfect picture of glee as I sat here fuming. I could literally feel heat coming out of my head as my wings vibrated with fury. I also

just came back and wanted some of Rayla's love and attention, why the hell was he getting all of it.

She shook her head and backed away from him, clapping her hands in excitement. "Which reminds me! The whole reason that I worked all night was so that I could take care of the bulk of everyone's work for today so we could take the day off."

Ax sat up as Lisa rolled in a tray of coffees, handing one cup to each of us as we all told her thank you. Then she handed an energy drink to Rayla and winked before walking off. Even Lisa knew what was going on?

My father's whiny voice whispered, "We should've brought Lisa. She's the only one that makes my coffee right." His fingers twirled over his other hand that mimicked a cup. "She also makes the foamy top look like fairy wings. It adds that magical touch that's lost in today's hospitality."

"Next time." Ternin nodded just as Manic got closer.

"Taking the day off? What issue could possibly need all of you?" His voice rumbled out the speakers, too loud and growly for first thing in the morning.

Rayla's smile turned devious as her eyes narrowed. "Oh, we're going to do a team bonding exercise." She glared at all of us equally. "And this is mandatory, especially after how you all acted yesterday." Lex looked at the ground while Falcon's lips were pinched, and I scratched the back of my neck. She was right. We all tolerated each other, but really, we barely knew each other.

Then she added, "If you really want to be in the dog house, then refuse this outing, and I'll make sure every night you will be scratching and whining to be let in our room like a puppy." That made all of us wince. That did not sound like fun. I couldn't turn that into a weird, kinky fetish even if I wanted to.

Then she turned back on her smile and sparkling eyes. "So, chop chop." She clapped at us. "You guys need to get ready. I booked out the whole place, and it's supposed to start at eight pm."

I swung my legs over and got up. Shaking out my wings, I realized that both Lex and Cosmo looked like they were ready to go, which meant

Ax realized it too and bolted for the stairs as fast as he could. The asshole wanted to lock me out of the shower so he could have it all to himself. I spread out my wings, ready to fly over him when I heard my father. “So, Rayla, how are you feeling? Pregnant yet?”

That stopped me in my tracks, and I slowly turned around, ready to yell at my father for bringing it up for the millionth time, but I didn’t need to when my fierce girl started laying into him.

“Look, Syris, it will happen when it happens. Right now, I’m just trying to get these boys to be cordial to each other. Not add another variable to the mix.” He pouted to the camera, and she glared at him. “Plus, don’t think that I don’t know what you’ve been doing.”

His eyes shifted for a second, a clear indicator that he had been doing something. I turned fully around and waited to hear what was going on between my father and my mate.

“I couldn’t possibly know what you’re talking about.”

Father’s pearly whites were all on display just as Easton came into the camera whispered in passing, “I forgot to tell you. She knows.”

His eyes grew as his mouth opened wide before he shut it and looked around with a guilty smile. Ternin asked, “She knows what?”

Rayla cocked her head as her tone switched to a lazy annoyance, like this was something she had been dealing with for a while. “Oh, just that Syris has been spiking my cocoa’s in the morning with vampire prenats.”

Ternin’s face mirrored my own, filled with rage. Both our voices were in sync when we turned to my father and yelled out, “What?!”

“You have been drugging my daughter?”

“You have been spiking my mate’s drink?”

Cosmo and Lex stood rigid, going between glaring at my father and glancing at Rayla to see how she was taking it. They looked surprised and pissed, but the both of them took their cues from Rayla. Those habits seemed to be ingrained in them.

“It would be only a hop and skip to go over and kill him.” Lex said to the room as he narrowed his eyes on my father, but Cosmo shook his head in agreement. Both of them ready to get on a plane now.

I pointed at the TV, “Naw. I think Ternin looks like he would do the job for us. He’s already in position.” Ternin zoomed up behind my father with murder in his eyes.

My father glared at Lex and Cosmo. “Oh, you two boys could try, but you won’t succeed.” Then his gaze softened as it landed on Rayla, trying to cover his tracks. “I mean, drugged is a strong word. I would say that I made sure that she was taking an ample amount of daily vitamins. Vitamins are good for the body, right? I mean, Rayla, your hair looks so shiny and full.” He put his hands on his hips as he put the nail in the coffin. “I mean, a thank you would not be turned away.”

Ternin’s hands circled my father’s throat, and he yanked him away from the phone, yelling at him for trying to steal and drug his daughter like a psycho. I heard Manic’s warning in the background, “Ternin, no! If you keep this up, I’m going to have to stop you.”

Easton picked up the phone, his humor-filled eyes flicking to where our fathers disappeared as he called out, “I think we better go. Who knows, I might get to try my first attempt at necromancy.” His eyes twinkled with glee before the phone went out with a click.

Rayla was laughing when Falcon tapped on his screen, unplugged his phone, and went for the front door.

“Where are you going?” I knew both of us were going to have to wait for our turn now that Ax beat us both to the shower. He scoffed in the direction of our room. “I’m not waiting on that

beast. I'll head to my fathers villa and change there. I think I still have some clothes there."

That's a damn good idea. Wish I'd thought of it. Stupid smarty pants mage.

I felt the air whoosh behind me just as a hand smacked my ass, and my fierce girl's voice floated around my ear. "Let's go, my fairy prince. I don't want to be late." She gave my ass a squeeze for good measure, and a bubbly giddiness filled my belly.

I grabbed her hand before she could remove it and turned to face her with my wings out. I kissed her hand, turned it over and kissed her palm. Her sigh of pleasure wasn't enough, and I kissed her pulse, making sure to graze my teeth along the vein. She gasped. That's what I wanted to hear.

"I'll be a quick, fierce girl. Don't leave without me." Then I went to copy Falcon's idea, and I headed to my father's villa he had on the Desmond compound.

CHAPTER 4



WHAT THE HELL IS she thinking? It was the third time I had thought that while I was following behind her car to this place, she was keeping a secret.

“Okay, Cosy, where the hell is she taking us?” Ax rumbled from the back of the car.

I shook my head, not knowing the answer even as I was trying to figure it out by the streets we were taking. I had Ax and Lex in my car, as she had Avery and Falcon. It was irritating to always have to be the second driver. I even showed Rayla a SUV that could fit all of us, and she scoffed, telling me she wanted to go in the opposite direction. She wanted to become a biker gang. She kept showing me videos from social media with people doing tricks and getting into all kinds of shenanigans.

When I reminded her that bikes were more her thing than mine, she laughed and said I could be her ‘backpack.’ To which -surprise, surprise- Lex poked his head in and said that he wanted first ‘backpack’ privileges. Fucking little eavesdropper, always lurking around like that was his damn job. Plus, she offered to have *me* as her ‘backpack,’ whatever the fuck that was.

“She said team building, so I hope it’s something bloody and brutal.” Lex’s eyes drifted out the window in excitement.

When we turned into a strip mall that looked abandoned, I already had a bad feeling. I didn’t like things that looked like no one should be there. That’s usually where bad shit happened. My whole body went on alert, immediately going into guard mode. Nothing was going to happen to Rayla ever again. Not on my watch.

I swerved right next to her, jerking the car as I threw it into park and quickly moved onto the sidewalk as she opened her door.

“Come on, Avery, it doesn’t look like a place you could get hepatitis from. It’s clean on the inside, promise.” Her teasing laugh was like music to my ears. I loved when she laughed. She used to do it so rarely, only when Rick was able to pull that sound out, but now it’s different. Now, she had mates that made her laugh. While it was annoying to share her, to be one among many, when I got to see her like this, it made all those conflicting feelings worth it. Even if some of them were a pain in the ass.

“You agree with me right, Cosmo?” She turned her sunset gold eyes on me, and I nodded out of habit. I didn’t care what I was agreeing to as long as I was agreeing with her.

Avery’s shrill voice assaulted my ears. “What?! Cosmo’s opinion doesn’t count. He would agree to anything you say!”

She slid her body alongside mine, cupping my face as she turned it toward her, giving me a sweet peck on the lips. Just a tease of a taste. My body craved more as I dug my nails into my palms, keeping my composure at all costs. She looked up at me, and instead of the easy, teasing attitude that I was used to all my life, she gave me an eyeful of lust and hunger. “That’s what a good mate does.”

Her gaze zero’d in on my lips as she bit her own, and I almost broke, almost dragged her off into a corner to show her how good of a mate I could be.

A familiar growl sounded behind us. “Let’s just get this over with,” and the spell was broken. She looked around me and glared at Ax.

“And that’s why we’re here. That attitude right there.” She pulled away from me, chasing after her angry wolf to argue, taking all her warmth with her. I missed her, even though I could see her in front of me.

Avery and Falcon followed them. Avery yacking away at Falcon’s side, trying to find an ally for this hepatitis campaign of his.

“It’s harder than you thought, huh?” My nose scrunched as my eyes turned into slits, and I glanced at the smiling demon beside me. When I didn’t answer, he turned, watching them all as Ax opened the door, and they all filled inside the building. “You got used to having her all to yourself for so long that even though you don’t want to kill them, even though you want to make her happy, you still feel jealous of them. Jealous of the time they are taking. Time that was yours. Time you took for granted.”

My teeth clenched, anger at myself for being so transparent filled my body. I don’t know why, but out of all of them, Lex got under my skin the most. His lurking presence was suffocating. His attitude like we were cut from the same cloth irked me. I was much more useful than a killing machine.

His hand landed on my shoulder, surprising me as he whispered next to me, “It’s harder for us. The ones who had a piece of her from the beginning.” I shook his hand off just as Ray’s head popped out the door.

“You guys coming?” She waved at us both to come quickly.

Lex shot off, smiling as he called out to her, telling her that we had a good chat and were getting along swimmingly. I would call him a liar, but that was the one thing about Lex, he never lied to Rayla. Not even a little white lie. Maybe in his fucked up head, we were bonding in what he thought was our shared experience, but for me, it was more like he was informing me that out of all of them, he was the one who could try to steal

my something special. The thing that made me different from all of them.

I took a breath and shook it off. Knowing that whatever Ray had in store was going to take all of my patience and I needed to focus on that.



Everyone was at the counter when Ray looked up, shoving a paper and pen in my face. “Here is the consent form. Just sign it and give it to Lance over here.” She pointed to a human teen sitting across the counter, looking down at his phone as he huffed in annoyance, glancing at us before his eyes went back to his phone.

“Calm down, kid. I don’t sign anything without knowing what I’m agreeing to.” Ax called out as Ray rolled her eyes at the statement, but it looked like all of us agreed with him.

“Wait, what does this mean about “a magic barrier will seal you in the room until event has completed or in case of deadly emergency”?” Avery looked at the kid who then glanced at Rayla.

“Sooooo,” she grinned from ear to ear, entirely too excited about what she was going to say. “You know how I wanted us to spend some bonding time? Get to know each other more? Work as a team and not hate each other?” She mumbled that last part, which just made Lex giggle, Ax huff, and Falcon lift an eyebrow. “Well, I contacted these professionals who host escape rooms and had them customize one just for us!”

She leaned forward, eyes glowing as her face bounced to each of ours one by one in excitement. The kid slid off the stool and lazily walked down a dark hallway, calling for us to all follow when we’re done. I don’t know what she was expecting from us, but she didn’t let our deadpan silence bring her down as she trotted off after the kid.

Lex was the first to push through. “I don’t know about you all, but I am kinda excited to do this. It seems so ... normal.” He skipped after Ray, calling for her to wait up for him.

Avery was the next to head off, making an extra effort to not touch anything since it all looked barely pieced together. He started to mumble to himself over and over, “It’s for Rayla. This will make her happy. If she is happy, I get sexy time. You got this, Avery.”

Falcon was already scrolling through his phone as he followed. “So, it says these ‘escape the rooms’ are just a few simple puzzles. This won’t take long.”

Ax and I followed in the rear, both of us not terribly excited, but at the same time, wanting to make Rayla happy. After yesterday’s slights and fights, I wanted to prove to her that we were fine. That all that stuff was normal when you had several strong personalities in the same room.

The kid opened a large steel door that had rune carvings around the edge. All of us waited to get into the room as the kid sighed, leaning leisurely against the door as he called out, “Done yet? They’re here.” He threw his head toward us like this was the last thing he wanted to do.

In a split second, a short, blue-haired woman popped out of the room, looking side to side before she focused on Rayla. “Ooooooooooh, Mrs. Desmond herself!” The woman squealed as she ran up to Ray.

The fact that Ray didn’t stop her from invading her space, giving her a softened smile, was suspicious. I could tell immediately that she was a mage by the aura of magic around her. She scanned the rest of us with an inquisitive eye before leaning toward Ray and whispering, “I can’t wait for them to try it out! They will be my first!”

She sharply turned to face us, standing straight, giving us a pleasant but practiced smile. “Hello, my name is Jem Dovan. I’m an air mage with an affinity for rune magic, and I make thrilling trap rooms for teams or strangers to come together to figure out how to escape. We usually cater to humans, but recently opened some rooms for supes. When Mrs. Desmond here called with this special request ... well, you don’t turn down a Desmond in Nevada.” She motioned to the kid leaning against the door. “This is my son, Trip. My husband is a

human and runs the human side of the business while I handle the supes side.” She winked at her son, whose face drooped, lips turning into a frown. She ignored it as she laughed and turned back to us.

“Let’s get started, eh?” She closed her eyes and then opened them, speaking in a storyteller’s spooky voice. Apparently, theatrics were also a thing of hers. “For this room, you’re all hotel investors and coming to view a run down hotel that was last open in the twenties. Once the door is closed, it won’t open again until you figure out all of the puzzles.” When Falcon frowned at her, she cleared her throat. “Or if there’s a deadly emergency, which in that case, there’s a speaker with a red button next to the door.”

Falcon nodded and went into the room first as Ray was thanking her, giving her a stack of bills and waving for us to follow him.

We all filed into this twenty by twenty foot room, feeling the buzz of magic in the air, but I could tell that all of the items in the room were real. Even the smell of the room was old and stale. The room was stuffed with various items you would find in a lobby, but the caked-on layers of dust and dirt had been aged, giving it that look like this room was really from the twenties. Sometimes, the simple things magic could do was impressive.

“Oh, my god! Do you see this?” Avery dragged his finger along the check-in desk, lifting up several layers of dirt as he screeched, “It’s almost worse than outside!”

“It’s curated dust.” Falcon tipped his head in thought for a second before continuing in his regular flat informative voice. “More accurately, it was dust that was spread through the room with her air magic, and then she used a rune stone to turn time forward to make it more authentic. An impressive detail for something as mundane as a game.”

“Maybe she wanted to show us what she was made of? We are the new bosses of the Syndicate,” Ax said absently as he plopped himself onto the couch to the right. A cloud of dust puffed up around him, which had Lex and Avery chuckling.

There was a ticking noise that set my senses off, and I looked around the room. Was this woman trying to kill us with a bomb?

“Oooh, big boss man.” Avery continued to laugh, wiping at his eye as Ax growled.

I was slowly searching the room, trying not to alert anyone while assessing the situation as best as I could. If it was a bomb, I was glad Ray wasn't in here yet.

When the ticking grew faster, I decided that we needed to get out of this room. “We need to-” A slam sounded behind me as the steel reinforced door to the room clicked over three locks. All of us were silent for a second, not understanding what the fuck was happening.

Being the closest to the door, I lifted my fist to bang at the door open. If Ray was on the other side getting hurt by these people, I would make them pay with every inch of their lives. Just when I was about to smash a hole in the door, someone grabbed my wrist. I turned to yell at whoever it was when I saw Falcon nod to the door. “There is a protection spell around the room.”

He released me, going within an inch of the door as he narrowed his eyes. “Looks like it's a protection barrier. No amount of force is going to get us out of this room, no matter how strong you are.”

I remembered what that Jem lady said before and found the square metal box next to the door, pushing the red button as I called out, “Ray, are you okay? What's going on? It seems like we're locked in this room.”

It took a second, but my mate's beautiful voice crackled over the speaker. “Hey, guys! I'm fine, and everything is good. So, figure out the puzzle together, and you will be released. If it happens before the night is over, you can collect your prize! Have fun! Love you all!” The air in the room was sucked out after she clicked off. *She couldn't be serious, right?*

“Oh, that naughty, naughty rose. I knew she was up to something ... I just hoped that she would clue me in before

she did it.” Lex growled, looking pissed at the door with his arms crossed. It was probably the first time he was genuinely upset with Rayla. My chest squeezed as I realized that I was not going to be able to be by her side or know what she was up to while I was stuck in here, and that was maddening. I needed to get out of here ASAP to take care of Ray.

I rubbed my chest, trying to dull the ache that I was feeling, and Lex gave a half-hearted shrug and looked at the door in longing.

You and me, too, brother.

Brother!?! What the fuck was happening to me? The day I think of Lex as a goddamn brother, just shoot me in the head. That little stalker and I were from completely different planes of existence, and mine was based on reality, not what I made up in my head.

Avery ran up to the speaker, pushing the red button in a panic. “Rayla, you can’t be serious. Open the door now.” Nothing but static came over the speaker. He tried again. “Rayla! Come on! You can’t lock us up here forever.” He looked around and grimaced. “Its fucking filthy!”

Ax snickered from the couch. “So, blood spatter, organs, and bodily fluids you’re fine with, but dust is your hard no?”

“It’s not that I can’t handle it ... ” he looked around again, “it’s just that I would prefer not to “hang out” in a place that is filled with microscopic bits of random dead skin, dead insect parts, bacteria, and a whole bunch of random things.”

“Learn something new every day,” Ax said as he crossed his arms and stared at Avery like this was going to be his new way of torturing him.

A heavy, pompous sigh filled the room. “Let’s just get this over with. She seems determined on this and wont let up.”

All of us inhaled as we started to search the room for clues, not knowing what they hell we were looking for.

All I knew was that once we were done, I was going to make that pale, perfect bottom of hers as red as a cherry for

subjecting me to this. It was my only solace as I searched with men I barely tolerated.

CHAPTER 5



DON'T THINK ABOUT IT, Avery, and you should be fine.

We were all looking around this crappy, dirty little pretend hotel lobby room trying to find something that resembled a clue to get out of this hell hole. A piece of me wanted to throttle my beautiful and amazing mate, but even as I thought about it, it took me five seconds to turn it into a sexy escapade. It made the whole angry side of me calm down just as my dick was kicking into hell yes gear.

Then another part of me felt like we deserved this. Especially with how we acted yesterday. Usually, it wasn't all of us acting like a dick at once, but yesterday was that day, and my fierce girl felt the need to dole out a punishment that was also an attempt to get us to get along. I lifted my nose and grimaced at the light above that was flickering inconsistently. Seeming not to bother any of the others, but partnered with the gross dead cells that covered this whole room, it was just icing on the hate cake.

I knew Rayla was having a hard time when we got nasty to each other, poking at each other's hot button issues. Most of the time, I tried to not cause any problems with the others, being the easy-going one, especially since I noticed her starting to fidget during the meetings and having a clenched

jaw when we argued or spat out jabs at each other. Yesterday was just a particularly bad day for me.

The plane was late, I was irritable about not being near my mate, and whenever I left, I got a mad case of jealousy, which was a feeling I was not used to. I was so jealous of those that got to stay home with her when I couldn't. You would think with how open I was in the bedroom that I wouldn't have the capability for such feelings, but for some reason, it was different with bedroom activities.

When it came to sex, it was more about making her happy, getting her to scream out, making her feel things that she'd never felt before, and that seemed like a multi-mate job. I wasn't jealous when they touched her, hugged her, or kissed her like normal mates would when another male was around their mate. No. It was only when I was away from her for an extended period of time that this needle stabbing feeling filled my heart, and I got restless. Antsy and irritated.

It felt like someone turned on the heater, my left side warming up more than normal when I heard a gruff voice speak. "You know it's hard for me to connect that the big, smooth-talking, playboy fairy is *scared* of dust." Ax sneered out loud enough for the others to hear as he leaned against the wall.

My back went straight as I slowly turned to face him, glancing at the place where his back met the wall before focusing back on him. "It's not that I'm "scared" of dust. I just don't like it." I looked around in disgust. "Especially from some random strangers. Do I need to explain what dust is made of again? Was that hard for you to compute?" Ax growled in my face, trying to intimidate me, but after you fuck your mate side by side, the bark and bite don't seem so tough. When all he got was me dusting off my clothes as I ignored him, he stomped off. *Avery, forty seven, Ax, nineteen. Suck it, dog man.*

I turned back to the corner I'd decided to look in. It had the least amount of surfaces, and I felt it was the cleanest corner of the room. The plastic fake plant in the corner looked suspicious, and I leafed around there, trying to find something, anything out of place. "It would be nice to know what I'm looking for?"

Grunts circled the room until Falcon pointed at the door without looking at it. “We are looking for five keys to open that door.”

I jerked my head to the door, only seeing a key hole where the handle was. Before I could bring that up, he blew out in frustration, “Look at the four corners.”

I rolled my eyes at his attitude but did as he said, and sure enough, that dick hole was right. *Well, shit.* I’m starting to be glad Falcon was around to figure this all out for us. With that in mind, I continued to look around my space. Over, under, and behind the small side table with new enthusiasm.

“So, were you really as big of a playboy as you were rumored to be?”

I hesitated before I stood up and faced Lex, who was in the center of the room grinning at me but the look in his eyes said he was genuinely curious. I was starting to learn that you only really needed to be worried about him when he stopped smiling and laughing about everything. That’s when he turned off all thoughts and did what he felt like doing. Or what he thought would be in Rayla’s benefit.

I shrugged, not really wanting to talk about that with my mate’s mate. What’s in the past was in the past, right? “I don’t know all the rumors, but I know that before I got to know Rayla, I didn’t believe that love and loyalty was in the cards for me.” I didn’t want to see the expressions from everyone, so I pretended to feel around the side table that I already checked out.

When no one said anything, I saw Lex was still looking at me expectantly like I hadn’t answered his question. I growled out before thinking, “Look, not everyone had parents that loved each other like all of you did.” I ran my hands on my pants, trying to pay attention to something else.

“How do you know that our parents were in love, huh?” Ax tried to play devil’s advocate, but I cruelly laughed at his attempt.

“The funeral. Ternin, Manic, and Easton all looked crushed, half dead, even. While my father was upset, he was perfectly fine greeting people at her coffin, never looking at it once.” My jaw clenched as my mouth continued, even as my mind told me to shut up. “He had the same impassive face when we took her ashes to the land of fairy, and it was the same look he gave her when he saw her lovers leave the estate while she was alive.” I ran my hand through my hair, old emotions were bubbling up inside of me, and I was having a hard time keeping it down. I have kept it buried for all these years, but after what my father told me a month ago, all that stuff started to come back up again.

I gave a broken, sad laugh. “Even as a young kid, I noticed this behavior from my parents ... how their relationship was more of a business deal. He never took on a lover while they were married, but my mother always had a new flavor of the week. When she died, my father fell into a depression. I thought that he had finally figured out what she meant to him, but I was wrong.”

Shoving my hands into my pockets. “I found him blackout drunk one night, murmuring, professing his love to some woman I never knew he loved. I knew I didn’t want to be like that.”

I laughed, full of empty humor at my old self. “When I realized that no woman had awakened any need for more than just sex, I thought maybe, maybe, I was more like my mother than I thought. I both loathed and loved her for it, foolishly grasping at a distant memory of her to connect to. Then I met Rayla, and all of that changed.” While I did fall in love with the woman, my heart tugged at an old memory from way before. When I first saw that white ashy hair and golden-pink eyes. My six year old brain thought she was a little fairy goddess at first, that was until she started wailing on Ax. Remembering how my heart thumped against my chest and how transfixed I was on the little demented pixie girl in the sandbox. I was a goner for her even before I officially met her as an adult.

“It might be weird to say now, but I think I fell for her that day at the playground when she yelled at Ax, pounding into him as she told him snitches get stitches.” Ax and Lex snickered in agreement as Falcon’s lips twitched from his normal frown, and the corner of Cosmo’s lips tipped up hesitantly. I keep forgetting that he wasn’t there for that time in our lives, even when he knew her as a child as well.

Lex’s chest puffed out as he boasted, “Oh, that’s not weird. I knew the moment she sucked the blood off my finger that we were meant to be, no matter where our life took us. I was devoted, obsessed, in love ... whatever you want to call it, but all in for my rose.” His eyes took on a gooey, love puppy look as he clutched at his heart. He was really annoying when he got like this. Ax chucked a book at his head, which he dodged, and almost hit me!

“The fuc-” A clink sounded on the ground where the book hit.

Lex shushed me before he pointed down to the floor and kicked over a rug to reveal a black, steel metal box in the floor. “I found a safe. Do you think that’s important?”

Falcon was the first to jump up and examine the safe like it was a bomb. We all circled around them until Falcon got up and investigated the door. After a minute, Falcon turned and smiled, which was creepy. He pointed at a corner of the safe that Lex found, and we all looked down to find a small heart shape. “This shape is the same shape of the upper left hand key hole. I think this safe has that key, which means that we have four other safes to find. Then the real puzzle starts.” He moved back to the corner he was inspecting as he threw over his shoulder, “We need to each find a safe, now.”

Like a gun went off, all of us bolted to our corners, desperately searching for safes. There were grunts and weird noises coming behind me, furniture being moved, and people mumbling to themselves. Even Cosmo, who was normally the calm, quiet one, was being a weirdo. He was completely engrossed with examining a set of leaves on a fake plant like it held the answers to everything. No one was going to hide a clue there.

Falcon cleared his throat, going into lead scientist mode. “Even if we find all the safes, we need to find all the numbers that are used to open the safes.”

“Hopefully, they’re all the same four-digit numbers for all five safes.” We all did a slow mo turn toward Ax as his hopeful face sank. He rubbed the back of his neck as he mumbled, turning toward his wall like it just called his name. “Just putting it out into the universe, you bunch of dicks.”

For some reason, our resident psycho folded over, busting up, wiping the tears from his eyes as he pointed at Ax, which seemed to have a ripple effect on the rest of us. Even Falcon gave Ax a side-eye glance before exhaling out his nose, turning to stare at an old mosaic picture on the wall he was examining.

“So, I gather that all of your dads were sad and depressed after that incident?” Lex sat in front of his safe, knocking on it like he was going to do something.

“Why do you ask?” The words came tumbling out of my mouth before I realized I said them.

He lifted his hand, staring at his fingers that had swirling smoke weaving in and out, almost in a transfixed state. “I never had parents. I didn’t know they could be like that.”

“I didn’t have a parent until I was almost six,” Cosmo said like that meant nothing, but I couldn’t imagine life without my father. “And I don’t know if I would say that Ternin was the pinnacle of parenthood.” He snorted to himself. “He did threaten to kill a six-year-old and thought ice cream was proper punishment.”

We all smirked at that. These past six months, we have really gotten to know our father-in-law, and he was straight up cray cray. If he wasn’t conning us into doing something for him, he was scheming behind our backs with our fathers, making bets against us like fucking race horses. It’s maddening, but my father has never looked so joyful and alive joking around with his friends. So, I shrug it off.

Also, we all know that Rayla and Cosmo have somehow developed a bottomless pit when it comes to the icy sweet treats. Both of them acting like it was a fucking food group all on its own. I believe Ternin was to blame for that.

The light on my side of the room was flickering again, my eyes getting more and more agitated with each flicker. Was it supposed to be scary to have a flickering light? It meant that something was wrong with the electricity, not that some scary man was going to pop out of the potted plant. I eyed the plant again, envisioning someone like Lex slithering out of the plant saying ‘gotcha!’, so I kicked it for good measure. *See! There was nothing in the damn pot.*

“Sometimes, it’s a blessing to not have parents than to have absent ones.” Falcon’s eyes flashed from the normal dull blue to a vibrant cerulean in seconds. His voice turned cold in fury as his whole body clenched up. Now, my father wasn’t the best, I highly doubt any of ours were that great, especially after the incident, but for Falcon to show that kind of emotion ... his dad must’ve been really out of it.

Ax suddenly spoke up. “Yeah. My father was a mess. Moping around, trying to stay busy but failing at everything, leaving piles of messes in his wake. It was not the highlight, for sure. It also made him insufferable about keeping me safe and insistent on learning to control myself and my wolf.” Ax’s eyes flashed for a second, his wolf peeking out before he folded his arms and sneered, “A lot of good that did.”

A puff of breath skittered along my neck, and I jerked forward, swiveling around, ready to yell at whoever was getting into my space when a set of pitch black pools were staring at me. Lex tilted his head before he asked, “Curious minds want to know ... did you ever figure out who your dad was pining for?”

I was taken aback for a second, having completely forgotten I mentioned his one slip up. The night we returned from the land of Fairy. The night I realized that my father did love someone, and she was most definitely not my mother.

I tried to feign indifference, keeping my face lax and my eyes calm. “Why do you ask?”

He took a step back, giving me my much needed space. “Well, from the looks of it, all of your fathers have the same level of respect for loyalty. The same burning desire for their person, even if they weren’t officially mates. I was kinda hoping this meant that my father would’ve been that way for my mother ... all super in love and shit.” His eyes penetrated mine, even though his voice had notes of humor, I could tell from his eyes he was very serious about this. “But with what you said, now it’s making me wonder ... purely for selfish reasons, of course.”

My brain was going off a mile a minute, trying to figure out what to say. Should I tell them what my father confessed to me a month ago? I haven’t had time to talk to Rayla about it yet, still trying to wrap my mind around it. Rayla did want us to start bonding, and maybe being honest about something like this would do that ... but I also really didn’t want to.

I kept going back and forth in my head between the reasons to not and the reasons to just say it. It’s not like it was my secret, but he also didn’t tell me not to tell anyone. These guys are Syndicate, so they have a right to know, but it was also private, so were they really owed that information? Round and round I went until a bored matter-of-fact voice sliced through all my thoughts.

“If it’s private, you can just say that. We won’t pressure you.” Falcon’s eyes softened for a split second, letting me know he really meant it. From the silence in the room and the hesitant faces, I could tell that they all were curious but wouldn’t push.

It felt like a moment, a moment that I couldn’t turn back from. If I didn’t take this chance to be honest, to bring them into my world, we would go about our lives the same we always have, and Rayla would be disappointed.

Why was I always the one that had to be the glue? For sex, and I guess, for guy conversations too. It was tiring being me.

I exhaled slowly, my mind made up. “Look, I haven’t had a chance to talk to Rayla about it but ... Ternin and my father were both in love with Jennifer, Rayla’s mom.” Mouths

dropped, eyes went wide, and I rushed to continue what I knew.

“I guess they were both in love with her, kinda tried to court her at the same time, but in the end, my father backed off, she chose Ternin, and that was that.” When no one said anything, I followed with, “About a month ago, I got frustrated with the whole situation of me having to go to New York and being away from Rayla. He then told me that he was proud of me.” I was still stunned about that. When he said it, I almost wanted to ask him to repeat it so I could record it and replay it whenever he asked for babies.

“He said that after watching the five of us with Rayla, seeing how we’re trying to make it all work. He wished he and Ternin could’ve done that with Jennifer. He thinks they could’ve been a lot happier if they did, and he wouldn’t have blamed Ternin for her death for so many years.” I didn’t mention that he followed it up with how he admired and wanted to know more about my ‘dope sharing buddies’ but I didn’t feel like they needed to know that little nugget of information.

“Eeeewww, so you could’ve been Rayla’s brother?!” Lex’s eyes flicked to Cosmo, whose whole face fell as he glared at Lex like he could kill him with just his eyes. Lex grinned, getting the reaction he wanted from him before turning back to me.

“I don’t think I could ever look at you the same way.” Lex made an exaggerated shake of his shoulders like he just got the chills before filling the room with raunchy laughter, causing the others to loosen up and snap out of the shock.

“Look, it didn’t happen, so-” I tried to combate him, but I should’ve known better. I was arguing with Lex, that was already a losing battle.

“Yeah, but it sounds like Syris wanted it to” Ax chimed in, grinning from ear to ear.

Oh, man. I think I made a mistake. Fuck these guys. Immature pricks.

Lex gasped to the others. “Is that why he keeps trying to get her to call him Daddy?!” That was it.

I felt my power rising up just as I sang out with all I had at Lex. “*Fist yourself in the balls.*” Everyone stopped and watched as Lex’s hand lifted. His eyes bounced between me and his lifted fist.

“Awww, come o-”

“*Lips shut.*” His lips slammed together, eyes widening as his voice was muffled, whatever else he was about to say was just background noise. I crossed my arms and gave him a jackal of a smile. Reminding everyone in this room that I could play dirty with the rest of them, I could be vicious and nasty too.

His eyes gave me one last flick, filled with anger, but I saw a twinkle of respect, and I was going to take it. His arm swung down, and as soon as his fist met the target, I laughed as his muffled cries rang out.

“That’s what you get. Don’t fuck with me, demon.” I was in the middle of basking in my revenge glory when the lights in the room went out, and that damn flickering light above me was the only thing giving off any light.

I growled out my frustration as I turned around to smash it to pieces. I would rather be encased in darkness than have that damn light flicker above me. I stared at my target, ready to get rid of it with my fist raised when I noticed the flickering was happening in a pattern.

Flicker, flicker, long pause, long pause, long pause.

As the flickering went on, I realized that this was morse code for the number two. Excitement bubbled up inside of me as the lights in the room came back on, and the light stopped flickering, but I knew from experience that it would start up again.

“Hey! Do any of you have a pen?” We all looked at Falcon, who’s lips pinched. I opened my hand, reaching out. “I know you have one you, brainy mage, hand it over. I think I solved my safe.”

CHAPTER 6



I AM GOING TO kill that lollypop-haired fairy if it's the last thing I do.

A rising need to jet over to where he stood and rip his balls from his body vibrated all through me. I had a high tolerance for pain, so while I'd grunted and made the motion of cupping my dick, I wasn't in as much pain as he thought I was.

Normally, I liked pain. My first vivid memories were of pain.

The rumble of the ground. The ear numbing boom that shook me to my core. The flash of bright red and orange that crackled in the sky as a dirty smoke filled my lungs. The impending doom that crawled through the air around me. All of those memories laced in pain, knowing that this was the moment my life took a drastic turn. That my life was heading down an even more painful road, but it all wasn't bad.

I clung to the memories of those rosy lips delicately wrapping around my finger. The flash of white ashy locks partnered with golden-pink jeweled eyes that shined with life. The pale, cold hand that grasped mine, causing heat to radiate in my heart.

No. They weren't all about pain. She never gave me pain. Not real pain.

My mind flashed to the last time she slammed her glorious fangs into my throat. The intoxicating feel of them ripping through my skin. A bead of blood dripped down just before she licked it up, slurping at my essence that gave her life. Her own body became taut above mine as I gripped her ass.

I could feel my body screaming at me, telling me we needed to find our mate and play out what's going on in my head. The moan that slipped from my mouth was an indication of how much I enjoyed *her* kind of pain.

“Are you ... getting turned on by hitting your own dick?”

Ax's disgust brought me back to the situation I was forced in. My anger cooled from my desire for my mate.

I lifted my body from being bent over, even if I still wanted to pluck Avery's wings off and watch him squirm for using his magic on me. *I needed to get some fairy training, soon.*

I replied, “What's it to you?” He flung his hand out, not replying as he shook his head and turned back toward his section of the dingy room. I knew Falcon wouldn't pay me any mind, his brain was already about to explode. The second Avery mentioned figuring out his safe, Falcon's left eye twitched as he quickly scanned the table and walls in front of him. That had to be driving our resident genius up the wall that the pretty boy was showing him up.

I felt Cosmo's eyes on me, watching me, and I turned to stare back. He looked unimpressed, which was his default look, but at the same time, his brows pinched like he was trying to figure something out. Being the only one that was not good about keeping shit to myself, I asked.

“Awe, Cosy, do you want to rub it to make it better?” His body grew taut, gearing up for a fight, one I would enjoy partaking in. Me and him still have a score to settle, and my rose wasn't here to stop me.

His lip curled as he turned, stopping halfway before throwing out over his shoulder, “Why?” The sincerity in that single word threw me off, made me pause.

He must've felt the same because he quickly followed with a menacing sneer. "Did your uncle beat you up so bad that the pain you went through made you this crazy?" He rolled his eyes to himself like he didn't even believe what he just said, but he was right.

I shrugged. *Isn't that how everyone trained in our line of work dealt with this?*

I caught myself unconsciously rubbing at my wrists, remembering back to that day it all started. The way my training would forever be laced in pain, blood, and gut-retching feats. The first session, he had broken both wrists, having his mage magic them so they wouldn't be able to naturally heal over time, then threw me into a ninety foot hole in the ground and told me I needed to be out of it within a few hours. It was either that or be buried alive when they filled it up with dirt. That lesson was especially hard because as soon as I was about halfway up, they started to fill the hole with dirt, purposely trying to hit me to knock me under.

Thinking back, I was too naive. Just a kid begging to be loved, cared for, wanted by someone, anyone. The night before, my uncle told me he was taking my training to the next level, making it so I would be at the same level as my peers. I was so happy. Glad that I was making him happy with my progress. I didn't realize that night was the last night I'd ever really felt like a person instead of a dog he wanted to bring to heel.

When I saw all of them staring at me with various degrees of shock, I instinctively took a step back. "What?" Did I say any of that outloud? Their faces make me feel uneasy. "Come on." I gave a humorless laugh. "Don't tell me that you all haven't gotten hurt while training? Like you haven't had to purposely go through painful scenarios for hours, if not days, to build up your tolerance?" I looked around, smiling, because these assholes were trying to make me look like a chump, and that's one thing I refused to do in front of them.

When they still hadn't said anything, just giving each other glances, my heart skipped a beat, feelings of dread and shame flooding my body. I needed to calm down. They were just fucking with me like they always do.

Swiveling to Cosmo, looking for a life line from the one who disliked me the most. “Come on, man. There’s no way that you and Rayla didn’t have some crazy bloody fights while training with Ternin, right?!” My voice cracked, the desperation for his answer bled through my voice, and I hated it.

I blinked, and he was suddenly in front of my face, no malice, no jokes, not even a grin as he softly said, “While our fights *would* be bloody, pain tolerance was never the goal. We trained to be better fighters and ruthless killers, so, of course, we ended up with bumps and bruises, but pain was never purposely elongated.”

I looked over his shoulder at Ax, hoping that his pain-loving ass was in the same boat with me. As soon as our eyes met, he stared into mine like he was trying to tell me something telepathically before he looked down and shook his shaggy head.

Craning my neck to the side, meeting Falcon’s steely blue gaze, and for the first time since I knew him, they held a hint of remorse. He shook his head as he looked me dead in the eyes. I didn’t even need to look at Avery, who calmly spoke up. “My father might be eccentric, but pain training? Naw. That isn’t his style.”

With each sideways glance, each flicker of their eyelashes and stiffening of their postures, my stomach sank. A sickening, dizzy feeling rose up. I tried to push through, to put on that mask of a smile and force myself to feel better like I always had. With each passing second, I felt my smile start to crack as a memory worked its way forward, flashing before my eyes.

My uncle stomped up to me, his face pinched in disappointment as his eyes narrowed at my prone form on the floor. I just got my ass kicked because I wasn’t paying attention. Instead, I was daydreaming about my pale-haired obsession.

She looked really good today. She was in her bewitching feral form as she came home from school bloody and smiling. It made me wish I was there, wish I was by her side to get a

glimpse of her in her element. I bet she runs that school with her gorgeous pinky finger.

“Obviously, this training is too easy for you. So easy that your mind has been allowed to drift so much that you don’t pick up SIMPLE PATTERNS!” The back of his hand smacking into my cheek, chattered my teeth so hard it was difficult to think straight. The side of my face feeling so raw I knew it was immediately bruising, but I deserved it. I wasn’t paying attention, but I wasn’t about to admit to that.

I crawled to face him on my hands and knees, bowing my head like I knew he wanted. “I’m sorry, Uncle. I will make sure to keep my mind sharp next time.”

The next thing I knew, he grabbed me by the hair and yanked my head up. The pain in my scalp radiating down the back of my head, and I bit the inside of my lip, making sure I didn’t make a peep. If I did, it would be worse later.

“There’s not going to be a next time.” Shock splashed across my face as I remembered what he did to the last demon he said that to ... but he wouldn’t do that to me, right? I was his nephew, his brother’s son. All of this was him trying to help me ... right?

His frown creped up, turned into one of his scary you’re-going-to-regret-this grins. I braced myself, muscles seized up as I made an effort not to curl up to protect myself. He let go of my hair, standing straight as he crossed his arms. “It’s about time I adjusted your training, anyways, taking off the kid gloves.” He motioned behind me, and I noticed Kevin, his pet mage, make his way next to my uncle.

I didn’t like Kevin very much, with his beady eyes that looked at everything and everyone with disdain, and yet, there was a hunger in those eyes that seemed insatiable.

“Do what we discussed.”

That was all my uncle said when I felt the ground around me shake as stone rose, melted around my arms and legs to keep me in place. Even though I knew it was futile, my instincts

were to fight it. That something bad was going to happen. Kevin's lips moved as he mumbled a rune spell around me.

"Now, Lex, you need to trust your uncle. Do you think those other heirs are not getting trained in a similar way? I know those men of the Syndicate, and they are ensuring that their children are strong, unbreakable, and fierce. What kind of uncle would I be to not make sure you are at the same level ... no," his eyes gleamed with malice and revenge, "No. I want you to be better than they are."

The last words of Kevin's spell had been spoken, and the stone melted away from me, going back into the floor. I looked down at my hands, feeling like something was missing, something was locked up in my core but no longer ran through even the cells of my body like it usually was.

"Kevin has locked up your regenerative ability. It's been hindering you. Making you cocky and weak. Now, you will feel everything." His words stilled me as the room got darker, the shadows around me closing in. The feeling of violence and pain reverberated in the air.

My uncle and Kevin backed away as the darkness closed in on me. My heart was beating at my chest as my instincts told me to run, to get out of there as fast as I could ... but I had nowhere to go. Nowhere to run to. My uncle was all I had.

A pair of golden-pink eyes flashed before me, and a sense of longing filled deep in my soul. So deep, so powerful that I didn't really understand it, but I knew one thing. I needed to be able to stand next to her. Be strong enough for her.

Just as I saw a circle of demons surrounding me, eyes gleaming with ravenous thirst for blood and pain, I heard my uncle's voice before his face was fully engulfed by the darkness. A wicked gleam in his eye as he commanded.

"Begin."

A shiver ran down my spine as my muscles twitched, remembering that first beating in the dark. He said that all the Syndicate heirs would also have this kind of training, that he

was helping me to be at their level. Even with all his lies coming to light recently, I still thought that this wasn't one.

I slapped a smile on my face as I swung toward Cosmo, gave out a broken laugh, one that had an unhinged sound as it spilled from my lips, and I stalked forward. "You have to be lying, right? I saw Rayla coming back from training. I saw her bloody and bruised up. I'm her stalker, remember?"

Cosmo's lips pinched, his back straightening as he prepared his usual verbal attack on me and my psycho ways, but instead, he took a breath and turned those soul-crushing violet orbs at me in earnest. "That's because of Rayla. She never knew when to quit. Always had a higher blood lust than anyone we trained with. There were countless times while training that Rick and I had to pull her off of someone, making sure she didn't take it too far. That wasn't because of Ternin or her training. She's a Desmond, and they are a vicious lot, constantly testing the boundaries."

I felt something inside me start to unravel as I realized everything, every single aspect of my life my uncle was a part of was all a lie. Not a single sliver of my life with him was true. I could feel smoke tendrils slithering around me, the need to fill this room with darkness rose in my body. The injustice of what I went through in the name of keeping up with the others was turning my mind down a dark path, one threatening to consume me.

My teeth clenched. Just like always, I was the one on the outside looking in. The different one. The one with no parents. The outcast. *The one that didn't belong.*

"Whoa, what's he doing?" Someone whispered in the room, but I was trying to keep a lid on my powers that were reacting to my emotions. I tightened my fists, cutting into my palms, as I locked down on my powers.

A faint scent of lilies floated by, a recent memory of my rose being by my side, which gave me the strength to control the darkness. I glanced up at their hesitant faces and realized I must look really crazy right now. I tightened the grip on my

powers and reined them in. I didn't want to accidentally kill one of my eskimo brothers. Rayla would be so pissed at me.

As my mind cleared, I could admit that the training I received was effective. It made me into a well-honed tool for killing and bloodshed, but it was also needlessly brutal, painful. So much so that now pain turned me on, kept me going, made me feel alive. I don't think I could live without it. That and being with Rayla.

Thinking about her soothed me. I closed my eyes and focused on her floral fragrance, her laugh when she was torturing someone, the feel of her biting my skin. My neck tingled as I remembered the last time I fed her, and I felt my body react in the only way it knew how when Rayla was on my mind.

“Look, if Rayla is not here, *that* is unacceptable.”

Avery's voice cut threw all of my thoughts as I slowly turned to glare at him and his finger pointed at my crotch. I just got everything under control, and he had to go get me all irritated. I spat out, “Well, it's either this or go on a killing rampage, and since I'm locked up with you fou-”

“Oh, don't kid yourself,” Ax called from my other side, smirking in a way that makes me want to turn that smile into a grimace real fast. He motioned to everyone in the room. “Even if you came at all of us, it's one against four, I'm sure that we could easily take care of you.” I let some inky smoke slip from between my fingers, reacting in retaliation to his words.

Letting my magic take over, enveloping myself with shadows and smoke, disappearing right before their eyes. In a blink I was behind Ax, wrapping my arms around his neck.

I whispered against his ear behind him, loud enough for the others to hear and snap their heads toward us. “Is that what you think?” I let everything go at that moment. Letting the assassin in me come forward as I squeezed his windpipe, cutting off his air supply as he jerked in my grip and wheezed out a painful breath.

His body shook as I could feel his back muscles expand as he was starting to shift. I let him go, excited to finally let out

some aggression, as he quickly turned around and bared his growing teeth at me.

“That’s it, wolfie,” I murmured to myself. “Let that anger and rage consume you.” *Then we can have some real fun while I put him in his place.*

I was so focused on the shifting wolf in front of me, bouncing on the balls of my feet in excitement, that I flinched at the loud boom that sounded in front of us.

We both paused, looking at the bullet hole on the floor in front of us. A glint of shine came from the hole, and I tilted my head. *What is that?* I didn’t have much time to figure it out when the sharp, cutting voice of a furious mage sounded in front of me. “What the hell do you think you two are doing?!”

I looked up as he swung his gun between both of us with precision and ease, glaring like we were the two most idiotic, taxing, annoying beings in the world. It wasn’t anything I hadn’t gotten used to, just another Saturday afternoon with the boys, trying to kill each other.

So, the smartass that I was perked up and giggled. “Well, I would say I was trying to have a bloody good time with the resident pet,” that earned me a growl from said wolf, “but a big, bad, cranky magic man got in the way with his fancy smancy tool.” I flicked my hand at the gun that was currently inching its way up toward me. I think he wanted to shoot me.

His steel dagger eyes narrowed, his finger squeezing the trigger as he exhaled, trying to calm the flash of flames that lit up his eyes for a second. *Oohhh, I do think he wants to shoot me. Leveling up his game, I see.* I got a special satisfaction whenever I baited Falcon to break his stoic exterior to come out and play.

“You think that you’re the only one who had a less than ideal childhood? The only one who’s faced hardship?” Falcon’s arm shook, the clicks of his rolling barrel bounced around the room as he lifted it, pointing at my head. The venom in his words, his eyes swirling like blue magma, was catching me off guard. He doesn’t show this kind of emotion, like, ever. *What’s*

getting him so worked up? He spat out, “What kind of idiotic, self-absor-”

Cosmo appeared next to the barrel in a flash, pushing it down away from my head as he growled out, “What Falcon seems to be trying to say is that we need to get back to work to get out of this room. Right?!” Cosmo did a half turn to glance at Falcon, who paused, noticed what he was doing and huffed, putting his gun back into his secret mage pocket as he turned away from us. After a beat, Falcon started mumbling about “imbeciles” and “getting rid of the dead weight” like his old self again.

Cosmo’s eyes met mine, drilling his eyes into my soul as if he was trying to tell me something with his hard stare. I decided to stare back at him with the same intensity. Maybe if I did it hard enough, he would be able to hear my thoughts. *Act like a dog and sniff Falcon’s butt!* After a few seconds of that, his lips curled up in disgust as he quickly shook his head. *Ha! He gave up. I win!* In a flash of a second, too quick for me to do anything about, I felt his hand land on my shoulder, squeezing it just before he zoomed past me back to his section of the room.

What the fuck was that? With his back to me, I almost wanted to ask him, but then decided against it. I might not know what that was about, but he wasn’t yelling, glaring, or threatening that he was going to tattle on me to my rose, so I was going to let his weirdness go.

I turned away to find Ax had already changed back into his human form and was staring at me. His eyes didn’t hold the earlier anger I was expecting, no, it was even weirder than that. With his arms crossed and his brows pulled tight, he looked at me and looked at Falcon, his expression pensive, before he shook his head and went back to his section of the room.

Another odd reaction. Is something affecting the guys? Is there odorless, smokeless poison in the air? I looked around for evidence of said poison when I noticed a set of vivid green eyes staring at me. Laughing at me.

I glared at Avery, who was clutching his key as he leaned against the small side table on his side of the room. I didn't particularly like that knowing smile and cocky attitude directed my way. It made me feel murderous tingles.

"Looks like you have more in common with us than you thought, lone demon."

My immediate reaction was to pop over there and rip his head off his body. I envisioned his blood splattered across the wall like my own Jackson Pollock painting, but my rose's devastated face flashed in front of my eyes, and I knew we couldn't do it.

Instead, I flipped him off and looked back down at my safe in the floor, not wanting to acknowledge what he just said because if I did, then everything would change. I thought about the past six months and how my life had changed so drastically from what I thought it would be. Maybe change wasn't so bad?

There was a twinkle of shine that caught my eye, and I remembered the bullet hole and how I saw that before. I got on my hands and knees and looked through the hole. There was a long cylinder thing, but I couldn't quite make it out, so I punched right at the bullet hole spot. "Hey!" Someone yelled, but I had to know what was in there. I kept going, making the spot weaker, causing the wood to bend, and a piece eventually broke off.

I yanked up the floorboards, feeling all of the others' eyes on me, but I was laser focused on what I was doing. When I got a big enough hole, I stuck my hand in and grabbed at the shiny metal cylinder and pulled it out.

"A flashlight?" Ax scratched his head, eyes pinched, trying to figure it out.

Falcon stared at the flashlight for a second as I turned it on, and a purple hue came from the light source. Black light. Falcon popped up, ran to turn off the light switch, and said, "Point it around the room."

I stood up, pointing it all over the room and saw nothing stand out or illuminate. I could feel bated breaths release, the disappointment swirling in the room, hoping that we would get one step closer to getting out of this room. Then Ax called out. "Try the ceiling."

It wasn't the worst idea, so I pointed it up, and as soon as the black light hit the spot right over the safe, four numbers lit up, shining like a beacon of hope.

While I was in the middle of memorizing them, the lights went on, and the numbers disappeared. "Hey! I was-"

"I have it memorized. Put these numbers in." His short clipped tone had me rolling my eyes, but I complied. I got down as he said, "9, 2, 4, 1."

As soon as I rolled the one into place, the safe clicked. I turned the handle and cracked the small door open. Right there was the second key. I scooped it up, grinning from ear to ear as I showed it to the others.

Falcon might not be smiling on the outside, but his eyes couldn't hide that shine of appreciation. He was secretly enjoying this little hunt, even if he had to deal with the rest of us. Ax whooped, Avery clapped, and Cosmo simply smirked.

"All right. Three more. Let's go," Falcon barked before he turned, but I could've sworn he nodded at me. Almost like he was telling me I did a good job, and that ... was infuriating but also made my heart squeeze.

I might not get along with these guys all the time, but they might not be so bad, either.

CHAPTER 7



FALCON

I NEED TO FOCUS. Just focus on finding the fucking clues and getting us the fuck out of here.

I wasn't an idiot, I knew why Rayla was doing this. I could see it on her face every time one of us would say something that made the other upset. I had dedicated the past six months to learning as much as I could about my mate, and one thing was for sure, she hated it when we didn't work as one functioning unit.

It wasn't the fighting she was upset about. No. She was used to that just by being in this world we lived in, one that was mainly made of strong men and females who would poke and jab at each other to show their power or superiority over the other ... or some other useless notion like that. It only bothered her when we poked at each other's issues, pains, or problems that she got irritated.

I could see her holding herself back, seeing if we would work it out on our own, but that never happened. The only time we had a semblance of teamwork was when we all bedded Rayla together. I don't think she understood that, at this point, we all had the same goal, the same want. We all wanted to see her scream, cry, and tremble with pleasure. That's it. That's all we wanted, all that bonded us. It was like everything else was

pushed into the background, not as important as what we were doing, but that didn't really work outside the bedroom.

"I can't even find the damn safe ...fucking thing ... pissing me off ... " Ax was grumbling as he was stomping around, growing more and more agitated. I caught him glancing at Avery and Lex, holding their keys with triumph splashed across their faces. Yes, I too could feel the rising pressure inside of me, telling me if those two idiots got a key, then I should've already had mine by now. It was a matter of principle.

"Keep searching. If they found theirs, we just need to search harder," I called out, trying to ease both our minds. I was already on edge because of everything that happened with Lex. I tried to calm myself down with logic.

He didn't grow up like the rest of us. He didn't know where his place was at a young age. Didn't have direction other than his sadistic uncle pushing him toward his own faulty agenda. He lived life differently than us ... harder.

An intrusive thought slithered into my brain. *He's the lucky one. His uncle may be a dick, but he didn't face the pressures of having a live parent. One who ignored you as a child. Left you to rot in his own room over the death of his wife.*

I took a breath, surprised by the aggravated tone in my head. What the fuck was I thinking? That was old shit, something I let go of years ago. Why was this bothering me now?

I thought I'd already let go of all those wasted childish feelings, cutting off those silly little desires for love and appreciation from my father a long time ago. It was ridiculous and so unlike me.

I rolled my eyes up to the ceiling, jaw tightened, as a thought crossed my mind about how he looked when he realized how truly little his uncle cared for him. Another useless feeling, sympathy.

The only one who ever broke through my uncaring iron mind, consumed with logic and strategy, was my stunning mate, Rayla. She was the crazy to my sane. The direct opposite of

me that had somehow lured me to the darkside and opened up a side of me I never really explored. The only person who had made me feel wanted since my mother passed.

My finger traced along the handle of my gun as I thought of Rayla and smiled. She knew that words filled with emotions and sentiments meant little to me. The only thing that made me feel whole was using my intelligence to be useful. To the Syndicate, to my inventions, to my mate.

She was the only one who reminded me daily, with threats of death, how valuable she thought my weaponry skills were, how talented she thought I was. She was desperate for magical weapons made by my hands, and my hands only. Seeing my worth and telling me often how integral my work and brain were. All the gifts, jewels, and money in the world couldn't replace her thirst for tools made by me. Those were her words, not mine.

Breathing deeply, I inspected my area again. The long velvet chaise I already checked, the silk-covered lamps that produced no clues, and the center coffee table that had an old newspaper opened to the entertainment page.

At first, I thought that page must hold a message and all I needed was the key to decipher it, but I have already tried twenty different ways with no results. My eyes landed on the chessboard in the corner.

I had dismissed this early on. I tried to move the board, but it wouldn't budge, glued to the table. That made me think it was important, so I checked all around the table and found nothing. Next, I tried to move a few pieces, but they were immovable, glued in their spots. It was useless.

I still have yet to find the damn safe, and it was driving me half mad. Where the fuck was it? I glanced down at Lex's hatchet job on the floor, contemplating. If it's nowhere that I can see it, then it must be where I can't see it.

With my hands raised and my gaze focused, I let my fire magic come forward. Fire flickered in my hand as I was deciding where I was going to hit first when I heard a shriek. "What the hell are you doing?!" Avery quickly ran in front of

me, blocking the spot I was going to light up first. “You can’t use your fire here! This whole place is covered in wood! I don’t want to be encased in a coffin of fire. Burnt fairy is *not* a good look for me.” He huffed as he kept his eye on my blazing hand.

Lex appeared out of the shadows with his trademark jackal of a smile. “I agree with the pretty boy. I don’t think lighting this place up is the way to go.”

An ugly feeling rose within me, something I had not felt since I was a kid alone in a big house with dead ghosts and a father who had succumbed to his own despair. My lips curled as I sneered out, “So you can find your safe under the floorboards, but I can’t? How typical of you, Lex. Always thinking you’re the only one.”

His face fell as his eyes focused on me, his whole body grew rigid, gearing up for a fight. If that’s what he wanted, I was ready. I wouldn’t bow down to this fool who thought he was the one who had it the worst, the only one with pain.

It only took a second, but something flashed across his eyes, too fast for me to recognize what it was, but his body relaxed as he threw up his hands. “Oh, whatever. Fine. Burn it up. Who cares? I will just make sure I get out of here alive, and then it will be just Rayla and I.” When I did not respond to his outburst, he let out an exaggerated exhale and flopped onto the velvet couch.

A loud clunk sounded just as Lex jumped up, rubbing his ass as he cried out, “Ow! This couch just tried to sexually assault me! Falcon, burn it. Burn it to hell!”

Did he just ...? I rushed over, pushing him aside.

“Hey! I’m the victim here! Defend my honor!”

It was always best to ignore him when he was speaking nonsense. I bent down and pulled out a pocket knife from my shoe. Ever since our incident with Vincent, I liked to make sure I had something on me that would help in case I didn’t have my magic as an option.

I stabbed the couch cushion that Lex was sitting on. Lex's voice sounded behind me, "Oh, ya. You kill that couch. Kill it dead for me. Avenge the honor of my ass."

Closing my eyes, I took a breath, reminding myself that he was a part of the Syndicate, one of the bosses. He was also one of Rayla's mates. I couldn't kill him. It would make her very upset. No. Killing him was not the solution.

The shuffling of the others surrounded me as they gathered around the couch, watching me as I yanked the knife down, slicing a slit down the velvet fabric, and pulling it apart. Desperate to confirm my suspicions. If I was a different kind of man, I would be smiling, I would be standing up and yelping in excitement as soon as I saw the black steel box nestled inside of the couch. That's how I would've reacted if I was a less complicated man.

Sitting back on my legs as I stared at the black box for a second as the others around me chattered away at my safe being found. "See, I knew my ass was useful!" Lex boasted.

Ax puffed out a laugh, "Ya. Your flabby, fat ass was super needed here."

I felt a pull of magic, noticed the shadows were bending around me, reaching for their master. Before anyone could prevent anything, I felt the magic snap out, releasing the shadows to go back to their natural spots.

"You know what? My rose likes my ass, she grabbed it just the other day. Can you say the same, wolf boy?" His taunt was met with a low growl and stare, but that was it, surprising me that it didn't escalate.

"Now, we just need the numbers. Did you figure that part out yet?" Avery asked seriously over my shoulder. He was in my space, and I resisted my immediate urge to shove him away, knowing he would just whine about it, and I didn't have the patience for that now.

"I will." Standing up, I turned around, and I reexamined the area. Retracing my steps, I looked at the walls, moved under

tables and chairs, inspected the space around the lamp, trying to find something, anything that was tied to four numbers.

The others tried to help, looking around in silence. “This one seems hard ...” Avery scratched his head, looking from side to side.

Back at the coffee table, I stared at the chess game and the newspaper. It had to be between either of these. Everything else just didn’t make sense.

I could spend my time going through the newspaper line by line, trying to figure out if any numbers were bolded or italicized, but I couldn’t shake the feeling that the chess set had something more to it.

Concentrating on the chess board, I took a different approach from earlier and tried to figure out what each side was doing. Black had most of its back row still in place, except for its horses, with the king pawn out. White had the king’s pawn out two spaces, a bishop on its left, and the queen out on its right.

My father’s words drifted around me from the first game we ever played when I was six.

You should always find the most quick and efficient way to get rid of your opponent. If that doesn’t work, then learn as much as you can about how they operate.

“So, what’s this thing with black and white squares?” Lex goes to pick up one of the pawns on the end and can’t since it’s glued to the board.

Cosmo saddled up next to him, arms crossed as he gave him the side-eye. “You’ve never heard of chess before?”

Lex scratched his head like an imbecile. “I don’t think I need to know about chess to kill people.”

Avery’s laughter filled the room, “Naw. I guess you don’t need to know how to play chess to do that.” Avery turned to Ax, looking for a comrade, but Ax was already staring at the chessboard with pinched brows, mumbling about how he should’ve paid attention to his father when he tried to teach him.

Avery looped his arm over Ax's shoulders. "We were too focused on chasin' tail and learning the biz for shit like chess ... but now that we're mated and locked down to one woman, it seems like we should've done a lot of things differently in our youth, Eh?" Ax shrugged him off but didn't hide the smirk forming across his face.

"Rayla and I learned-" Cosmo started, but Lex gave an exaggerated sigh, always irritated when Cosmo brought up their youth. I didn't understand that, since it was a fact, and he has helped us a few times in learning about Rayla, but I understood the wish to have grown up with her ourselves.

Cosmo glared at Lex as he continued, "but she was always the one to win against Ternin." I could feel everyone's attention on me at that moment, and I nodded. It looked like it was going to be my role in this group, the only educated and cultured one.

I moved around the table and sat down on the side of the couch that wasn't ripped up, chin in hand as I focused back on the board. Ignoring those around me, I looked at the pieces again, trying once more to see if I could spot a four digit numerical pattern.

"It's weird that the queen is out so early in the game." Cosmo said under his breath, but I immediately thought the opposite. Usually, very skilled chess players use their queen early on. It reminded me of the recent conversation I had with my father a few months ago after one of the transition meetings with the other bosses. Everyone had left, but he called out to me.

"Falcon. Can you sit for a moment?"

I jolted to a stop, not used to my father calling out to me like that. Rayla turned at the door, silently asking with her eyes if I wanted her to stay. Warmth spread through my chest at the thought that I had someone to count on like this now. Giving her a small shake, I was confident that I would be fine on my own. She blew me a kiss before closing the door.

I swiveled around in time to see my father use his earth magic to make a chess board.

“You remember how to play this, right? It has been a long time since we have played, but I hope you have been keeping your mind sharp.” I didn’t give any indication that his words had any effect on me, except for lifting my eyes slowly to his and raising one eyebrow. Who did he think he was talking to? He was the one that was out of commission for most of my teens and early twenties. He was the one that needed some brushing up.

He shoved the black pieces to me, and we racked up the game. I didn’t know what his angle was, but I was now curious to find out. Did he want to run more of the lab projects? Maybe I could convince him to take the Houston Texas lab, while I took the Las Vegas lab. This way, we both could still work to our hearts content but not be in each other’s way. It seemed like a fair compromise. Also, Vegas had the newer tools.

Before I could even broach the subject, we had already set up the game, and he went first. White pawn to E4. I didn’t want to fall behind, so I moved my black pawn to E5.

“You know why chess is the superior game?” I didn’t answer, knowing he would do that himself. “I like that it shows you a man’s character, not only about what they are willing to risk, but who they are willing to trust. Have they stacked themselves up right? Relying on the right pieces. And what are they willing to sacrifice for the greater good? It’s all valuable information on an opponent.” He moved a pawn to A3.

I nodded, calculating all the available moves in my head for the best outcome. I lifted my hand, fingers just about to touch my bishop to make my move when words I never thought I would hear spilled from my father’s lips.

“I’m sorry, Falcon.” Raising my head slowly I didn’t know what to think. Was this a trick? A ploy to win the game? To teach me a lesson? The sincerity in his eyes made me pause my thoughts, confusing me. When was the last time I saw warmth in my father’s gaze? Something other than calculation? The only time I could think of was before my mother died.

“I” I didn’t know what to say. My hand fell on the table in front of me, my insides shifted at the now awkward situation, but I was at a loss for words.

My father looked down at the board quickly, eyes scanning, looking for something to do even when it was my turn, still. That’s how I knew he was uncomfortable, too.

His voice grew heavy and low, filled with regret and sorrow. “You know your mother was my other half, my neutralizer. What they don’t tell you is that once you bond, that internal string that holds you together never goes away, only remains dormant and gray. Always reminding you of what you lost, that you are not whole.” He lifted his hand, rubbing his chest like he felt it now.

It was hard for me not to feel a shred of sympathy, now that I had my own mate and bond. I know that if Rayla was gone, I would probably go crazy, feeling like this world wasn’t meant for me anymore. That’s how deep it went. She was too far burrowed underneath my cold exterior and entwined with my soul. It felt like she was meant to be there forever ... and to think of that being suddenly stripped away from me ... I could now understand his eternal grief.

My thoughts drifted to the four others, her other mates, and I knew that those bastards wouldn’t let me do anything drastic. They would bug me to the ends of the earth, never giving me peace. My mind drifted further ... but what if we had children? I could never shut my children out. They would be the only pieces of her I had left. The only pieces we had left.

“Then whenever I would look at you, I would see her face, a constant reminder that I failed. I failed my mate, my family. I” He looked away, shame clouded his face as he whispered, “I was useless. Even with all the smarts in the world, I was still nothing. So, I succumbed to my depression. I felt like that was all that I was worth. To live in misery, reminded of how much of a wasted being I was ... but then you got your powers, her flame.”

He took a deep breath, turned back toward me, eyes glistening as he confessed, “And I thought that I could start over. I might

not be the father I would be with your mother by my side, but I could at least teach you to be an adult, to keep her flame alive, but by the time I was ready, you didn't need or want anything from me. I felt the best thing was for me to not stand in your way and let things run their course, watching you from a distance."

Confessions and feelings were not my thing, but I couldn't hold back my tongue as everything I had buried deep under the snow of my cold heart came forward. "I may not have needed you, may have resented you, but deep down, I always wanted you around. I already lost one loving parent; I didn't need to lose another ... even if he wasn't ideal."

A sad laugh came from my father, and I was again stunned. Who was this man and what did he do with my father? And why did I not hate it?

"It's your turn." He reminded me and I scanned the board again, making sure my next move was the one I wanted to make. I wanted to show my father that I knew where my place was in this world and who my strongest player was. I moved my queen out to H5, the right side of the board.

He stared at my queen, his eyes losing focus. "Seeing you and Rayla, I think I know where I went wrong. Made the wrong move." His eyes lifted to mine. "See, Syris, Manic, and I chose to keep our wives out of the business. All of us for different reasons, but for me, I just wanted to protect your mother from all of this."

He fingered his knight as he continued. "I wanted her to be perched up so high, wanting for nothing. To be the soft, bright innocence to my cold, calculating ruthlessness, but now I realize it was just a pretty cage. One that set us both up for failure."

He moved it out, trying to prepare a defense against my queen, but the damage was already done. I slid my bishop out to the left of my pawn, giving my queen some backup, insurance for if he tried something roguish.

His voice dropped low, "Protecting your queen, I see. Didn't we just have this conversation?" He moved his other knight

out, setting it up to take my queen in the next move, but there wasn't going to be one.

"No. He," I threw my chin at the bishop, "was to grab your attention as well as have the queen's back." I picked up the queen and moved her to F7, taking his pawn as I called out, "Checkmate." He blinked, looked over the board again.

"The queen is your most powerful piece. She can strike and defend, she can win the whole game for you without you even touching your king, but she is the one most attacked. So, it's simple, you don't keep your strongest piece in the background just because it can get taken, no. You provide the best backup possible so that if she needed help, you had a piece ready." I leaned back, folding my arms against my chest with a cocksure smile.

My father stuck his hand out, and I just looked at it. What did he want me to do with that?

"The better man won today. I'm glad it was my son. I don't think I could handle losing to anyone else. At least you have the Winstale name." His normal sure-of-himself attitude was back, but his eyes were smiling at me, and I knew that my father was changing.

I don't know if it's because we left Houston, where my mother's home was, or if it's him hanging out with his friends again, but for once, I didn't feel the weight of the Winstale name all on my own.

"What's he doing? Is he fucking okay?"

Lex's voice snapped me out of my memory, and I glanced down at the board in front of me. "I'm fine. Just give me a minute to think." I felt my eyes shift as I noticed that while most of these pieces were not in the same spot as before, one of the pieces had triggered my memory for a reason. The piece was set up exactly in the spot that I had won with. The queen.

My fingers twitched, wanting to move the piece in the winning spot, but they were all glued down in place ... right?

I had checked about half the pieces before, trying to move them with no avail, but I couldn't get that feeling out of my

system. I lifted my arm, my fingers hovering over the queen for a second before I pulled and it lifted from the board.

“I thought the pieces were glued down?” Cosmo asked, disbelief coloring his voice.

“They are, all of them but this one.” I set the piece in the same dark square, F7. “Checkmate.”

As soon as the words left my lips, a spell was triggered, and four spots of the board glowed. C4, E1, E4, and E8.

Four squares, four numbers for the safe. “4,1,4,8,” I whispered just as Avery gasped.

“Oh, shit! Try the numbers. Try the numbers!”

Avery’s excitement spurred my body as I twisted around and put in the numbers. The sound of the locks sliding and the pop of the door opening was music to my ears. I opened the door and stuck my hand in. Curling my hand around a small brass key, I yanked it out.

“Man, you’re a fucking genius!”

“Hell’s, ya!”

“Great job, Falc.”

“Three down, two to go.”

My lips twitched. You sneaky little wild one. *How did she know something like this was going to work on us?*

CHAPTER 8



WHAT THE FUCK IS that buzzing sound? It was starting to grate on my nerves, chipping away at my steel-like attitude. As soon as it stopped, I took a breath.

With all of my knowledge and all of my experience with Rayla, I'll admit, she got me. I did not expect her to lock me up in a room with her other mates. Making this her own little form of soft-core torture.

"Now, we just need the soldier boy and the angry wolf to find theirs, and we're free!"

I slid my eyes over to Avery, glaring at that flamingo-haired fucker. How dare he make it seem like I'm on the short end of the stick. Like I was somehow less than them. My muscles grew tight as my veins raced with rage.

I wasn't about to tell them that I found numbers on the backs of some leaves on the fake plant in my area at the beginning. I found the key to opening my safe before any of them found a single thing. The four numbers that I was sure would open my safe as soon as I found it. My eyes twitched as tension filled every cell in my body. *But where the fuck was it?!*

Lex laughed in agreement while Falcon stared at the key, giving him a short, clipped nod. I was sure Ax was saying or

growling something, but I couldn't hear him with the rush in my ears. They were laughing at me, disrespecting me.

When Rayla ended up having more than me as a mate, I couldn't help but feel like it was payment for all the secrets I kept from her. I deserve to suffer for that. I knew that, but then I realized that even if I told her all those years ago, she would've eventually met these guys later down the road, and it would've been inevitable. They are Syndicate.

Over the past few months, I'd been telling myself the same thing. They are Syndicate, I don't have to like them, but I do have to respect their position in this organization. I might not have been born into this position, but I'd made it my own through blood, sweat, and exhaustion.

I usually kept my rage on lock, always letting Ray be the crazy psycho one since one of us needed to be level-headed, but Ray wasn't here, and the flood gates were open.

Stepping up to Avery at the speed of light, I blinked, and his neck was in my grasp as I held him suspended in the air. His eyes wide as I caught him by surprise. His fingers clawed at my hand around his neck, not expecting me to take it this far.

"I take all of your shit all day long. You think that the "soldier boy" won't fight back?" I squeezed his throat hard enough to make it sting. "I lived in an orphanage for unwanted supes before Ternin picked me up, don't think that I won't bite back. The Syndicate has taught me to take my time and wait it out," I bent toward his ear, "for the right time to strike."

Letting my fingers uncurl, I dropped him, but the sneaky fuck he was had his wings snap out right before his ass crashed into the floor. I stared back at him, glaring up at me as he coughed, rubbing at his throat.

His raspy voice came out. "What happened to the silent yes man?"

I folded my arms. "That's just for Rayla."

You lot, I can fuck with, just as long as I give your body enough time to heal and don't kill you, it should be fine. The one thing I've learned over the past six months was that these

guys were not snitches. If they really fucked with each other, they made sure it was behind Ray's back. If they got caught, they would be in for a punishment, and no one wanted a Rayla punishment. Current circumstances made that point loud and clear.

“Ooohhhh.” Lex rubbed his hands together, his eyes twinkling with excitement. “Looks like little Cosy's got claws, and he wants to come out and play.” His excitement at the thought of us fighting was like ice water to the fire in my veins, causing my brain to turn back on as I exhaled.

I chose to ignore Lex and the grumbling fairy as I turned and went back to my section of the room. They all might see me as some stupid orphan, or still have thoughts about me being raised as her brother, but I was also her mate, and they needed to know that. Needed to respect that fact.

They don't have to like me, but they will acknowledge me. They will see me, whether it was as a rival, threat, or ally. I would make sure of it.

That annoying buzzing sound started up again, but this time, the volume was dialed up, and I winced at the sound.

“What's wrong?” I turned toward Falcon, who was staring at me, one eyebrow up as his eyes assessed me. Not in a way that was caring or concerned ... more like I was an insect he was inspecting or a machine he wanted to take apart and examine. Sometimes, I appreciated his way of only seeking out knowledge and information, while other times, it was just creepy ... like now.

“You don't hear that?” I rubbed at my ears as it got louder ... more like two sonic booms were hitting me at the same time.

Ax was the first to act as he looked around. “I don't hear anything.”

Falcon narrowed his eyes at me before he walked over. “It would be weird if you did hear something since this room had a soundproof spell that sealed the room as soon as the door shut.”

I straightened up as the uptight mage circled me with his hand on his chin. “While werewolves have exemplary hearing, vampires can actually hear a few different tones that we can’t.” Ax scoffed, but Falcon paid him no attention as he came back around.

This was the first time I was hearing something about vampire’s hearing different tones. “And how is it that you know all about vampire hearing?”

Falcon cocked his head, still looking me over, not meeting my eyes as he responded. “I was in the middle of making a torture device and was testing different theories about what worked best on each species.” I crossed my arms, giving him a stance that said I was not going any further until he explained himself more. He gave a frustrated exhale as the three others circled in closer to hear.

“I ended up stumbling on a few higher pitched tones that no other species could hear but vampires. As it seems you are in pain when the rest of us hear nothing, I deduced that this was the reason.” This time, I didn’t find his droll, impatient voice irritating, hoping that he was right and maybe he could figure out how I could block the hearing. Maybe a rune spell?

Before I could ask, Ax opened his fat mouth. “So, what was the best torture technique for wolves?” Four sets of eyes swiveled toward him, Avery’s twisted face saying everything that we all were thinking.

Avery shook his head, pointing at him before turning away. “Nope. Not going to dignify that with a response.” His determined gaze focused on me. “Do you think the sound thing has to do with your safe or key?”

I lifted my shoulders. “I have no idea. It’s not like it was set for a certain time. It just happens at random ... but it has gotten louder with each ten to twenty minutes that go by.”

“What kind of sound do you hear?” Falcon’s tone was sharp and precise. All he was missing was a pen and a clipboard and he would be right back in the lab. I wanted to tell him to fuck off, but I also really wanted to stop hearing this noise.

My exhaustion at the situation bled out as I exhaled, “It’s more like a staticky noise. Like a live wire or someone on the other end of a line.”

“Oh, so, kinda like a white noise?”

I glared at Avery, making it seem like it was no big deal. “No. Not like white noise. If it was white noise, I could just ignore it. This is growing stronger and louder with time.”

“We’re just trying to help.” Lex scoffed at me, leaning up against the wall. The noise started up again, getting louder, and I gritted my teeth.

“You guys don’t hear that?” I barked out, getting more and more annoyed by the second.

Falcon just cocked his head. “So, you hear it now?”

“Yes!” *I thought he was supposed to be the smart one?*

I could barely hear Falcon mumbling to himself. “There is no clock, so it’s not a timed thing” He went in a circle, looking for some kind of clue as I was going crazy, clenching my fist so hard I thought my bones would break. “It can’t be related to the furniture or pieces ... we haven’t moved anything ... ”

His gaze settled on Lex, staring at him until Lex called out, “I don’t think my rose would appreciate you checking me out like that magic man. You better watch out.” He stood up, taking a step in Falcon’s direction, but all I could think about was that the buzzing stopped.

“It stopped.”

Falcon stomped in the direction of Lex, his inquisitive gaze turning to stone. Lex raised his chin as he looked down his nose. “I wouldn’t come up on me like that. I don’t think my rose would appreciate me hurting you, but it can’t be helped sometimes. Demons gonna do what we do ... and all that jazz.”

His spiel didn’t stop him, and just as Lex let out some of his smoke as a warning, Falcon shoved him aside and examined the wall.

“What the-”

“Here.” Falcon pointed but did not touch a section of the wall. “It’s an incredibly thin line, but you can see a square in this section.” He put his hand on it, and I began to hear the buzzing again.

“Shit. Stop.” I huffed, closing my eyes at the pain.

It suddenly stopped, and I opened my eyes to Falcon’s hand hovering over a spot on the wall. “I think there’s a magnetic pulse behind this square. That’s the sound you are hearing.”

“Wait, wait, wait ... that’s the first time I’ve leaned up on that wall. There’s no way that has been triggered each time.” Lex had a point, now that I was thinking clearly again.

“Then there must be more spots like this around the room. That would make sense as to how the sound happens at random.” He pointed around the room. “Search all of the walls. It’s slightly smoother than the rest of the area around it.”

Avery and Ax turned immediately and started to look around their area’s. Lex threw his thumb behind him. “I found that one, so that one is mine.” Falcon rolled his eyes before going toward his wall and inspecting it.

Before I could start to look around my space, I heard the sound again and whirled around to see Ax with his hand on a space, watching me. “Yes. You found it.”

He let go, fisting the air as he whooped. “Hell’s, ya! I beat all of you!”

I shook my head just as Lex taunted him. “You didn’t beat meeeee.”

“You don’t count,” he spat out, “your’s was by pure accident.”

“Still counts.” His smug voice was enough to make you want to punch him in his stupid demon mouth.

I started to look around my space all over again, but this time, looking for something specific, and it helped see things in a different light. I stopped paying attention to the furniture and looked around the walls.

Hearing another buzz, I turned and saw Falcon nod to me as he immediately let go of the spot that he found, standing next to it, waiting for Avery and I to find ours.

I looked around and noticed that each of theirs was at different levels of the room. The only levels that were left were the bottom and the top. I pulled my focus to the floor, trying to find something like what Falcon had found.

As I got on my hands and knees, I traced my hand along the floorboards. If something was either on the floor or the wall, I should be able to find the spot faster.

I was starting to grow discouraged, not finding anything, as I got closer to the edge of the wall. My fingers ran along the smooth surface, desperately hoping to feel some kind of difference, something that would give me a hint. If we did this, then we would only have Ax's safe, and we could finally get out of here, and when I did, Ray was in for some trouble.

A thought popped in my head that Ray would get a kick out of watching all of us try to figure this out without her. A piece of me knows that she would be so very helpful in the endeavor, but also, she would be incredibly distracting. My eyes flicked around, trying to find a hidden camera or something, but I knew it wasn't there. She was serious about us all trying to understand each other better and wouldn't want to interfere with that.

One thing was for sure ... as soon as I got home, she was getting a very big, naughty spanking when I got my hands on her.

Just as I pictured my red handprint on that plump, milky white ass, a loud buzzing noise filtered through my head and scrambled my thoughts. I lifted my hand off the side of the wall, and it stopped. *Did I find it?* I took a couple more quick breaths before I tried the spot again, and it did the same thing.

"I found it." I said, right before I growled out in pain as I heard that buzzing noise grow even louder, rattling my brain with its insistent buzzing sound like a swarm of bees circling my head.

I let go, the sound dying down, giving me a small reprieve before I heard it again while Avery said, "Me, too." I looked over to see Avery with his shiny, iridescent wings on display, hovering over a spot on the ceiling before looking at me with a smile that said he was going to enjoy this, and his hand pressed to the ceiling. I closed my eyes, took in the reverberating pain from how loud the sound was, my body shaking as I tried to breathe through it.

It stopped faster than I thought, watching the fairy float down to the ground with a sour face. "That wasn't as pleasing as I thought it would be." My instinct was to yell at him for doing it on purpose, just for fun, but his words stopped me as I realized what the underlining of that meant. Teasing and digging at me in a way that caused me true pain wasn't fun for him. Which in a weird way, meant that he cared, right?

No. I shook my head. There was no way he meant that. I watched his huffing form, his pursed lips, and eyes that didn't seem to meet mine. Well ... that's new.

Falcon stepped forward. "I have a theory." His eyes shifted toward me. "With each one that we found, it seemed like it got worse and worse for you, correct?" I nodded. "Then I suggest we touch all five spots at the same time."

"What?!" I stood up, nostrils flared, fangs out, and hands clenched as I narrowed my eyes on him as the animal side of a vampire started to come out, feeling threatened and backed into a corner. *What the fuck? Did he think this was funny?* If all five are triggered at the same time, I have a feeling my ears would bleed.

I was surprised when he turned toward me fully, his back straight, eyes clear of any emotion as he said in a calm low voice, "I'm not trying to hurt you. I think that this buzzing sound you are hearing is a low grade of electricity, and with each hand in the right spot, it's powering something up. Hopefully, to open something or show us something. I don't think this will open by force, only with a collective effort." I breathed out as something clicked in my head, and I put my fangs away.

His eyes filled with an emotion I didn't know he had, hope. He continued. "I'm guessing that even if it does hurt, if we time it correctly, it should be just for a second until the mechanics of this device kicks in."

It logically made sense, even if it was just an educated guess. I was going to need to trust his judgment, and oddly enough, I kinda did. I gave him a solid nod as I built up my strength, preparing myself for the pain.

His eyes flashed with respect for a second before he nodded and turned toward the group. "We need to all get into position, and I will count to three. On three, we all place our hands on the spot and hold for a few seconds." Everyone turned away, heading to their spots. Not a single one calling out a joke or making some nasty comment. Everyone was dedicated to seeing this through.

With everyone in place, Falcon wasted no time. "One. Two. Three!"

We all placed our hands on the spots, and for a second, my head felt like it was going to explode. For only a blip, my body waivered, and I almost took my hand off the wall, but I held firm because, in the next second, the sound slowly bled away until I heard a loud click. Everyone looked toward me, where the click came from, and waited.

It was only a few seconds, but it felt like forever before the sound completely stopped, and a loud grating sound started as a small section of the wall right next to me slid up, revealing a black safe.

"Fuck yeah! We found it!"

Ax's loud exuberance was echoed by the others, all excited to find the safe. I smiled as I punched in the numbers that I saw on the leaves, trying a few variations before the safe opened, and I grabbed the key and held it up.

This was what we should really celebrate.

All of them looked at me, stunned. Avery, of course, was the first to ask, "What the ... did you already find your numbers?" I mean, that's obvious, but I pointed to the plant.

“If you look at the leaves, they have numbers on them in the light. I found those right away but couldn’t find the safe.”

Lex’s stunned face turned into a sly smile. “You sneaky little fuck! Not telling us so that it would be your moment of glory.” He laughed, causing the others to smile or smirk as they all looked at me. He took two fingers, pointed them to his eyes before turning them to point to me. “I see you, bro. I see you.”

My lips turned up as I thought to myself, *maybe they do see me now.*

CHAPTER 9



“NOW, WE ONLY HAVE one more ... ” Avery turned to me with Lex at his back, and I growled, my wolf rising to the surface as we felt like they were putting our back in a corner.

“I’m working on it, all right?!” I turned away as I let out a ragged breath. *Calm down, Ax, we need to find the safe and numbers.* Everyone else has been able to do it, so I should be able to as well.

My wolf whined in my head for the twentieth time, asking me where Rayla was and why we were trapped in this room with our pack.

Pack. I always thought of us like a bunch of rivals reluctantly shoved together since we occasionally have the same goals and purpose. I glanced over my shoulder, catching them all watching me, and I shook my head. And it seems my wolf has already labeled them pack. *A pack of assholes.*

Growing up, I didn’t know much about pack life. My father made sure to isolate me for safety. It wasn’t until I was older that I understood he did that out of fear. Fear of losing me, fear of losing the last piece of his true mate in this world. So, he had me hang out with bodyguards and a small group of trusted pack members while he was gone.

After my mother died, he was hanging on by a thread, and one day, that tether ripped, and he became lost to his wolf. Roaming the forest and mountains for months, none of us able to catch him as he fell into a lone wolf depression.

All I remember of that time was loneliness. I didn't have my mother, who had doted on me constantly. I didn't have my father, lost in his feelings, and I didn't have any friends. It was just me and my wolf.

One night while sitting on the porch staring at the moon, feeling its rays soothe my pain, my father came trudging up the wooden steps covered in dirt and leaves. I could still feel the pain and grief coming off him, but it was smoother, more in control.

He didn't even look at me as he passed me, placing his hand on my head as he whispered sorry. It had been six long months, and that was the first thing he said to me. I went into the house, waiting outside of his room as I heard his shower kick on. I vividly remember I was going to yell at him, tell him how shitty he was, but when that door opened and he stepped out, he was a new man.

He shed all of his previous self, adapting this hard and controlled face as he spoke to me. "There's a lot we need to accomplish, Ax. Let's get to it." I kept my mouth shut, just so glad to have him back, that I didn't say anything as I followed him, and continued to do that. All of his training was about how to control myself, my emotions, and my wolf, never showing a glimpse of the man he used to be.

While he chose to use control and restraint as a coping mechanism, I decided to be wild and free. If I was going to die someday anyways, I might as well enjoy my time on this Earth doing the things I liked to do. That and I promised my wolf that I would never lock him down like my father wanted me to.

"Did you find it yet?!"

"Shut up," I growled over my shoulder to see Lex's smiling ass hovering right over me.

“Let us help. We already found ours.” He threw his thumb over at the others. Falcon stared at me expectantly, while Avery and Cosmo had the decency to look away, finding something really interesting on the floor and wall.

Anger and pride swirled around in my chest, ugly thoughts played on repeat. *See, you're dumber than the others. It took you so long because you're just an animal. You should just let them find it for you. It's faster that way.*

Growling at myself, cursing myself for my own poisonous thoughts. I scanned the section of my room that I felt like I'd combed through a million times. I had searched the long, thick, solid cherry wood check-in desk, the bank of boxes on the back wall with room numbers above each one. I tried to find the key's that belong to each box, tried to dial out of the ancient candlestick phone with no success. In short of demolishing everything in sight, I'd searched everywhere and still found nothing of use.

Wait ... demolish. I turned on my heel, looking down at the hole in the floor that Lex made, then shifted over to the velvet couch that had been torn up to find Falcon's safe. Maybe I had to do something like that?

My wolf immediately agreed with my idea, pushing his strength into my arms before I even decided to do anything. I felt my muscles contract, the tendons getting tighter as my skin grew taught at how big and fast my muscles were growing. I lifted my arms, wasting no time as I smashed them in the middle of the desk.

A loud crack was the first thing I heard before I saw the wood split, and it quickly broke in two, making loud noises as two pieces banged on the floor with a rumbling thud.

“What the fuck?” Avery's high-pitched voice came out just as the antique phone clanged onto the floor, and the check-in book fell with a thump.

Ignoring him, I dug through the desk pieces, throwing all the small pieces over my head, desperately trying to find something that could give me a clue. Something I could prove my worth with.

“Do you think this means something?”

I shifted to see Cosmo holding the antique phone up and showing that the bottom had three numbers on it. 1, 0, 6 ... why does that seem familiar to me? I quickly eyed the space in front of me and noticed that all of the mailboxes were three numbers starting with one hundred.

Scrambling up, I went to the box. Maybe it had some other key or clue to where the safe was. I stuck my hand in, at least I meant to, but was met with a steel-like resistance. The mailbox began to shimmer before my eyes until it magically turned from one of the hotel key mailboxes into a black metal safe.

“I found it! The safe! It’s here!” I pointed, turned to see Falcon already right next to me, hand on his chin as he examined it and nodded.

“Hells fucking yeah! I can almost taste the fresh air instead of this dust-caked hell hole!” Avery clapped as he did a little dance, too excited at the chance for freedom to care about how he looked.

“I mean ... Cosmo found the clue.” Lex said under his breath as he threw his head over at Cosmo, who was standing in his regular crossed arm pose, not acknowledging anything that either of us said.

With my claws at the ready, I turned, seconds from lunging at the smokey demon when I felt a hand grip my shoulder. A cool voice sounded next to me. “You did good, Ax. Now, let’s find that damn key and get out of here before we all kill each other.”

“Yeah, I think we’re all tapped out on “team bonding” time,” Avery joked, whispering more to himself than anyone, “but it wasn’t the worst time I’ve ever had.”

“All I’m hearing here is how much you all are in love with me. My rose is going to be so proud, but I need to put my foot down now before you all get any weird ideas. I’m hers and that’s that.” His arms came up to make an X in front of his body as he glared at each of us.

Falcon opened his mouth, his eyes blazing with that steel blue anger when he shook his head, rolled his shoulders, and turned away from him. “Don’t fight with crazy, Falcon. It’s a losing battle.”

“Yeah, we might as well let his psycho ass be.” Avery chuckled before looking at Lex and blowing him a kiss, to which Lex dodged and stuck out his tongue. Yep. This group was all a little insane.

“The probability of the safe numbers being associated with these mailboxes is high.” Falcon moved in front of the boxes, his eyes quickly moving from side-to-side.

“Are there any duplicates?” Avery flew over to his side.

Lex couldn’t be left out as he shadowed over to Falcon’s other side. “How many boxes are there?”

Falcon snapped, “You have eyes, count!”

Lex’s hands went up as he whined out, “Damn! I was just asking, magic man. I thought you already figured that out by now.”

Falcon huffed, immediately responding, “40.”

“See! I knew you knew!”

I shook my head, smirking to myself, silently wishing Falcon luck with those two.

Cosmo was currently walking around trying to see if he could find anything else. I thought about the items in my section. The safe was in the mailbox, the clue for the safe was under the antique phone, and I demolished the desk. The only thing left was the check-in book.

I saw it splayed out on the floor and sat down before I picked it up. This was the first thing I picked up and looked through, but thinking about it now, I just skimmed the pages looking for something obvious. Seeing how hard these clues are, I felt like I needed to go through it again. Look for any small clue.

Flipping through the first set of pages, reading each name this time. I tuned out the trio that was currently fighting, my wolf settling down, huffing in their direction with annoyance. That

was until Lex made a face at the back of Falcon's head and I felt a burst of humor fill my head space. Even my damn wolf was getting used to these guys. Ugh.

I rubbed my eyes after the fifth page, and by the ninth, my lids were slowly getting heavier. That was until I saw the name Ternin Smith on line number ninety-three.

Rayla's father's name was unique, no one I knew had that name or even something close to it. A little tingle began in the back of my head, gnawing on my brain as I felt like I was missing something.

I flipped a few pages to the front, scanned them quickly, and on the third page, line thirty-one had the name Ray Smith. Could this be a clue?

It took four numbers to open it, and if you put thirty-one and ninety-three you get 3, 1, 9, 3. *Could this really be it? Could I have cracked it?*

Keeping my eyes on the page, I barked out, "Hey! Try 3, 1, 9, 3."

The whole room fell quiet, four sets of eyes turned toward me in silent shock. Slowly raising my head, I glared at them. Desperately trying to keep my own hesitation and doubts at bay, I straightened up, calling out with confidence, "Well, go on. Try it." Falcon was the first to move, moving toward the safe as the others, for once, stayed completely still.

You could feel the heaviness in the air as the silence was deafening. Frantic hopes and silent prayers filled the room as the only sound was the beeps that the safe made when he entered each number. I felt my pulse beat hard against the skin at my neck, all of us glued to the situation at hand.

As soon as the click of the safe opening echoed in the room, my lips turned up. Whoops and hollering sounded, and I couldn't help the giddy feeling that fluttered inside of my chest. I fucking did it. I found out the fucking clue. Sure, Cosmo might've helped, maybe even having Falcon here backing me up gave me the confidence, or just having the two

jabbering idiots in the background helped me focus, but this last part was all me.

Before I knew what was happening, a flash of pink shot at me, tackling me to the floor. “Fuck yeah! You did it, man! The last key! I could fucking kiss you right now!”

His face was just close enough that he could make that happen, and that made a shiver run down my spine. I shoved him off quickly. “Don’t you fucking dare!” He sat down in front of me, a smile so wide it looked like it hurt, but the appreciation in his eyes was evident and made me stop before I could smash his soft-featured face in.

A dark shadow eclipsed us. “You sure did do it. I didn’t think it would happen, but it did. Way to go, wolfy!” I lifted an eyebrow at Lex, trying to decide if it was worth fighting him over when Falcon shoved him out of the way. He lifted a small brass key, motioning for me to take it.

“You did good, Ax. Now take this key so we can get out of here.” He dropped the key in my open palm before jetting over to the large door we all came in from. All of us followed him like moths to a flame, ready to get out of here.

He examined the door again before exhaling. “I don’t want to take any risks, so we need to turn them all at the same time.”

We all nodded seriously, agreeing with Falcon’s assessment. We worked as a solid unit sliding into our positions. I heard my wolf whisper to me, *Pack. Our Pack.* I wanted to fight that, wanted to tell him he was wrong, but when I looked around, I had to admit that we were starting to look like one, feel like one. Not just separate beings connected only to Rayla.

I used to think Falcon was just a pompous know-it-all, thinking he was right about everything, and I wanted to prove him wrong, but in here, I learned that he wasn’t really pompous. It was more that he was sure of his answers. He only talked and said things when he was most of the way sure it was correct. Seeing it all play out in real time, I grew to have a newer level of respect for him. All of them, really.

Avery, while being a chatterbox and the one who always joked at your expense, was also the one who rallied us. The one who lightened up the space when it was heavy. He may joke a lot, but it was really a means of an outlet for him. He was honestly the only one who could constantly get along with each of us on his own, unless he was cranky, then you had to stay away.

Cosmo has always been the asshole who had to put it in our faces that he knew Rayla better than us. It used to really infuriate me, causing me to feel less than in my relationship with her. In here, I realized he was just trying to find his place in all of this. While all of us were able to start a relationship with her without any baggage, he had to go through layers and layers of history to get to the spot he's in now. Then top it all off with trying to deal with all of us, her other mates, as bosses, while he's been trained to be her second all his life. That was not something easy to navigate, but he has done well.

And fucking Lex.

He was the one I had the hardest time with. It wasn't because of history or smarts or charisma, no. I hated the way he came into the Syndicate. I felt like he was accepted without any real trials or tribulations to get here. I felt like he was being handed something that he didn't earn, but I learned I was wrong.

While we all admitted life was not a piece of pie growing up the way we did with the fathers we had and the organization we were a part of, we were always cared for. When our fathers couldn't do it, people within the Syndicate stepped up until they came back around. Even with all of the hardship, our fathers were here now, able to guide us if we had questions or if something was bothering us. While Lex was a crazy son of a bitch, he had nothing. He had no one but Rayla all his life, and most of that was just spying on her and dreaming. He had nothing tangible to hold onto.

So, while his crazy ass bugged the shit out of me, I felt myself ease up on him a bit. Getting a glimpse into the horrors that was his life was enough for me to say that he had more than earned his spot by putting up with that asshole Vincent.

I slid my key in the hole and held on as Falcon said, “On the count of three.” We were finally going to get out of here, finally get to give that mate of ours a piece of our mind. Locking us in here like a bunch of children. I knew the arguing was annoying to her, but, come on, did she really feel like she needed to do this to us?! She was going to pay. This time taking a punishment all her own. Licking my lips in anticipation, I thought, she better be ready.

“One. Two. Three.”

As soon as three hit, we all turned our keys and stepped away from the door. For a second, nothing happened, and my heart sank. At least, that was until loud metal against metal noises sounded from the door. The noise sounded like things were unlocking.

The tension in the room was palpable, all of us exhausted, frustrated, and ready to get out of this place more than anything.

“I swear, when I see Rayla, I’m going to be so pissed,” I grumbled.

“We’re definitely going to give her a piece of our minds. We’re bosses too. She should have talked to us about it all if it really bothered her.” Avery’s brows pinched as he nodded, just as ready as me to tell her what’s what.

Falcon and Cosmo simply stood there glaring at the door, both nodding in our solidarity.

“While I can’t really be mad at my rose, I most definitely will be behind you nodding and pointing. Like, serious pointing. The kind where she knows it’s not a joke.” I rolled my eyes at Lex. I shouldn’t expect more, but I’ll take his weak ass having our back on this. At least it was something.

The door swung open, and we all fled out of there as fast as possible. The space we stepped out into was pitch black, leaving me feeling like something was off. I released my claws just in case this was another test and we had to beat a horde of creatures. I wouldn’t put it past Rayla to do something like that. She did have a strong Desmond streak in her.

The lights switched on, and you could hear a collective gasp. Right in the middle of the room was a large, blood-red bed with our mate standing in front of it naked.

“What took you guys so long?” She turned her lip down as she pouted. “I have been waiting for you all for *ages*.”

Not a single one of us moved, all of us feasting on every inch of her naked, creamy, pale skin. My mouth salivated as my dick hit half mast from simply looking at my beautiful mate in all her glory.

Not missing a beat, she called out, “To the winners go the spoils” She lifted one hand, placing a finger on her lips before she trailed that hand down her voluptuous body, teasing us with what was right in front of us. She lifted the black fabric slowly. “Now, your prize for working so hard is that you get a free pass. Anything goes.” She clicked something in her hand before throwing it on the bed. Spot lights lit up the walls behind her, walls lined with every sex toy, paddle, whip, or chain imaginable.

She secured the fabric over her eyes while we all stared at what was behind her. “Come here, my mates, and take what’s yours.”

Unsurprisingly, Cosmo was the one who beat us, flashing over there in a second as he yanked her head back and slammed his fangs into her neck. She yelped in surprise but quickly moaned out her praise.

“Oh, yes, Comso. Take out all that frustration out on me. Don’t make it nice and sweet. Make it raw and messy.”

He growled in response, sounding like an animal as he tore into her so bad that a dark crimson line fell down her neck, carving its way through the valley of her pale breasts. The scene caused me to step forward.

I parted her milky thighs, sticking my fingers roughly in her, playing with her wetness that had already covered my fingers. I whispered against her neck, “Fuck, mate, you’re already so drenched down here. Was it hard to wait for us so long? Did it feel like torture?”

Her breathing increased, huffing out a reply. “Yes ... so long.”

Avery flew behind her, grabbing her ass cheeks as he kissed the spot on her neck I just whispered against. “Don’t worry, mate, we’ll make use of this body.” She moaned out a yes in response, but his eyes were shining that neon color, and I knew he was up to something.

Just as the last syllable fell from her lips, he placed a gag in her mouth. “Don’t worry, fierce girl. That will come off when we’re ready. Right now, we’re going to take what’s ours, slowly.”

I could hear the complaining noises behind the gag, but no words were registered, and I chuckled. This was going to be a group torture effort.

Lex’s finger snaked in, collecting some of the blood on her body and circling her free nipple with it. I felt her gush on my fingers, and I exhaled. Trying to get some clarity as the smell of her arousal was driving me wild. My wolf was banging around in my head, telling me to rut into our mate, now. Barking that he wanted to spill our seed deep inside of her, trying to convince me it was the only way we could feel complete satisfaction. *Soon*. I told him. *Soon*.

“I got you, my rose.” Lex said against her breast before he flicked his tongue against her ruby red nipple, licking at her blood before grabbing her roughly and sucking on it like it was giving him life.

Her body trembled beneath our touches, begging for more.

Falcon’s calm, cool voice sounded behind me. “Oh, wild one, if you thought waiting for us was torture, you won’t be able to handle what’s coming for you. We are going to make use of this body tonight, over and over and over again.”

I felt her come on my hand and lifted it up to my mouth, sucking her cum off my fingers as my eyes rolled back into my head. I needed more.

I shoved her thighs apart, forcing my head between them as I licked her dripping center before I grazed my teeth along her nub, and a whimper escaped from her lips.

She wanted us to work as a team? Well, we're going to make her regret that thought.

We're going to show her that us as a team was dangerous for her health ... but knowing our little adrenaline junkie mate, it's going to be the perfect speed for her.



ACT 2

"Savage christmas
wishes do come
true!"

CHAPTER 1



I CAN'T WAIT FOR tonight. I kept saying it over and over in my head as my eyes feasted on Rayla. The sound of bones smashing, pain-filled cries filling the room while the blood drips made a steady musical beat. All of it was both soothing and arousing. My rose created art when she was doling out punishments.

It was just my luck that some werewolf decided today was going to be the day he died. The idiot thought he could try to rob the Syndicate on their own turf. There was always an idiot born every day, thinking that they were smarter or stronger than us, but it was a pipe dream. One that always ended in a bloody mess.

Avery and I were tasked with keeping her busy so she didn't suspect a thing, and so, we convinced her to do a small surprise pop in at The Lucky Fang, the Desmond's high rollers casino, to see if everything was on the up and up since the remodel.

She fought it at first, saying that everything was fine since they had top of the line security with a ten-point check at every entrance. If that was not enough, she had a small army of hardened Syndicate members scattered around the casino at all times, being her eyes and ears of the joint just in case the

employees were in on it. Needless to say, it was a hard sell to even get her here, so I was elated when they informed us that they just captured someone for trying to steal.

“Now, what kind of idiot tries to threaten the counters with a gun, then throws a slow speed spelled capsule at the guards at the door? Did he think that hadn’t been tried already? Do you think we are sooooo stupid that the guards at the door are the only ones you need to escape from?” She whipped out her switchblade and stabbed him in the thigh, his claws coming out as he cried.

He was strapped down in a chair, so the claws were going to be of no use, it was probably just a reaction to the pain he was feeling.

My thorny rose smiled at him. It was genuine and true, which made my insides burn, creating a hot bed in my belly that was about to burst. *How dare he make her smile like that!* I was the only one who was supposed to get those. I glanced to my side, seeing the pink-haired pretty boy’s face marred with a frown and arms stacked at his chest. Well, me and the others ... but that’s it!

“Calm down, Lex.” The normal laughter in his voice was gone as he never took his eyes off our mate and her prey.

I took the opportunity he gave me, leaning down to whisper in his ear, “Was that a reminder for me or you?”

He ground his teeth, refusing to look at me as he watched Rayla bump this up a notch by digging the point of her blade into her victim’s fingers, declawing him crudely as she made a mess on the floor.

I was needing something to keep my attention off the idiot that had all of my rose’s attention, so I chose to be a dick. “Come on, pinky pie. There’s no way that you’re not even a little pissed off that she hasn’t looked back at us for a whole ten minutes. Smiling and laughing with that fucker in the chair.”

That got his attention.

He shifted toward me, not making any large movements as he seethed out, making his lips barely move, “It’s not like they’re

on a date. She's *torturing* him. They're not smiling and laughing together, she's enjoying herself as she's making him wish he made different life choices." He turned sharply away from me, being the only one, besides my rose, that could handle my antics the best.

"Also, pinky pie? You guys are really starting to scrape the bottom of the barrel with these names." His voice was flippant, making you think he didn't care, but his hands clenched his biceps a little too hard when I used the name, so I know it did its job.

"Are you two fighting? I thought this was all figured out?" A waft of copper and dirt hit my nostrils, and I knew my rose was finally done with her victim.

I turned toward her, excited that she was giving me attention again. "Oh, no real fighting. Scouts honor." I lifted up two fingers, then switched to four ... *or was it five?* "Just playful banter. Right, pinky?"

Avery nodded, his eyes changed from the serious focus from before, lighting up as he smiled at her. Lifting her hand, he swiped a bit of blood off her cheek. "Right. All good fun while we wait."

She rolled her eyes, tilting her cheek into his hand, smiling up at him. "You know you both could've joined in. You're always welcome."

I grabbed her hand closest to me, rubbing my thumb along her pulse line as I kissed the center of her palm, just wanting to shower her with my attention. Breathing along her palm, I said, "You seemed like you needed this." Whimpers started up behind her. "Plus, we need him alive to tell the tale. If we were to join in, he would already be dead. The dead don't talk, my rose."

She nodded, lifting her hand in a signal, and a Syndicate member suddenly showed up with his hands behind his back, waiting for his orders.

"Take this one, put his fingers in some acid before you dump him." Her wicked smile flashed a bit of fang. "It will stunt his

healing process and make it quite painful for the new claws to grow.”

“Yes, Boss.” The vampire said before dragging the chair with her victim away with him.

She took both of our hands and walked toward the doors. “Let’s go home and get cleaned up.”

Avery and I looked at each other over her head. His eyes said, *It’s too early! We need more time!* I winked at him, responding with my own eye words. *I got this, just follow my lead.*

I stuck out my bottom lip and made sure my face looked pathetic before I stopped, and she turned toward me in question. “But, my rose, we aren’t done doing the full inspection. Didn’t you guys just put a new club in this place?”

She looked up at me, eyes shifting to the door before they flashed over to me, giving her my best puppy dog eyes as she bit her lip. “Well”

Avery piped up, “I know Falcon said he was working late, Cosmo had some newbies to train, and Ax is probably just now getting on a plane from Montana.” All of this was a lie, but he was surprisingly good at it. It made me slightly suspicious of him.

He turned on the charm as he gave her a saucy look. “Plus, you promised to take me to the club opening, but we got ... caught up ... remember?”

Her eyes widened as she opened her mouth, “That ... I mean ... that was your fault!”

He nodded easily, playing right into it with a smirk like he remembered exactly why they missed going to opening night, and he wouldn’t mind doing it again. “Yes. Yes. It’s my fault. Alllll my fault.” He tugged her toward the door. “So, why don’t we go up to the Syndicate suite, get cleaned up, and head down for some dancing and drinks. Check it out, make sure it’s up to our standards, and then head back home. By then, everyone else should be home.”

She tilted her head, eyes flicking between both of our eager faces before she shrugged. “Why not? We might as well call

the desk and have them bring us up some of the new Prada line that just came out. I had my eyes on this new lacy top and side split skirt they had.”

She lurched forward as Avery winked at me. *See, I knew we were the right men for this job.*



It was excruciatingly hard not to join her in the shower. Trust me. It took almost all of my strength. Avery even stopped me a few times, reminding me of the plan. He and I were supposed to keep her busy while the three others got everything ready for her early Christmas present from us.

Tomorrow was Christmas Eve, and all the fathers made it clear that they would be crashing in our mansion to celebrate and do whatever traditions they all used to do separately. The present we wanted to give her was definitely not parent approved, so we had to do it a little early.

Since this was my initial idea, knowing that this was a deep desire of hers, I called in reinforcements to make it happen. Surprisingly, they were all on board, even the stuck up Cosmo thought this would make Rayla excited and surprised. I knew I would already have Ax’s support, it was right up his alley. It was really about convincing the mage and fairy to join in the fun. When I told Falcon it was going to take some heavy magic, he was in, happy to show off his skills. Avery was the hardest since this wasn’t really his bag, but I convinced him to use his wings, and he agreed to it.

The shower cut off, and the door opened. We were not ready for her to walk out completely naked. That was when I knew we were in trouble.

Avery practically floated toward her, his eyes roaming her body, hypnotized by all the curves and soft skin. She smirked, putting a little extra sway to her hips and bounce in her step. I bit the inside of my lip, tasting blood to snap me out of it.

I closed my eyes, snagging Avery by the collar as I dragged him over to the living room area as I called out to her. “So

excited, my rose! We'll wait for you over here.” As soon as I rounded the corner, I smacked Avery, waking him up from his trance as he growled at me with his fists raised. I pointed my finger in his face, frustrated and angry that I couldn't partake in that creamy skin-covered delicacy next door.

“You almost blew it! We agreed with them that we wouldn't bring anything to completion. We can tease and do some hand stuff in case of emergency, but nothing else. Or do you not remember Falcon's calm threat to shoot our dicks off with his magic gun if we got them wet.”

Avery shook his head, rubbing his face with both palms, suddenly looking exhausted. “You're right. You're right! It's just ... I mean ...” He made a high-pitched whine as he motioned toward the wall she was behind.

I nodded solemnly. “I know. We just need to get through the next hour or so, and then we should be fine.” Both of us took a few deep breaths, trying to calm down, and keep our eye on the prize. I definitely did not want my dick blown off. If that happened, I would kill him, and it would be a whole mess.

The door clicked, Rayla came out, and I almost cried. Like, water gathered in my eyes at how painful it was to keep my hands to myself. She stepped out like a dark, glamorous goddess. Her hair cascaded down her back, in contrast with the black lacy crop top that stopped right at her rib cage, cupping her breasts. The lace was placed in just the right spot to cover her nipples but show off everything else. Then she chose to torture us even more with a thin as sin, tight-ass black skirt that hugged her hips low but had a slit up the front that made it very obvious she was not wearing underwear.

Fuck me.

“You ready boys?” She flicked her fang with her tongue, winking at us as her thigh carved its way from her skirt as she inched toward the door.

I leaned sideways toward Avery. “Okay, so there will *definitely* be hand stuff. Agreed?” The desperation in my voice was mimicked in his quick response.

“Agreed.”



We got star treatment when we showed up at the club. The manager immediately ran up to us, eyes wide in panic until Rayla told him we were just there for some fun and to check out the new place. He barked into his little black earpiece for his employees to get the Syndicate booth ready and walked us over to it personally.

As soon as we were situated, a vampire woman zoomed up to our booth to take our drink order. “I’ll be back in two seconds,” she assured us as she jetted off to the bar.

We all nestled in. Avery was looking around the club with a clinical eye, seeing if there was anything he thought we should change. He was the expert in that kind of thing. I, on the other hand, was just trying to find something to keep my mind off my stunning mate and her wandering hand that was inching closer and closer to my already hard dick.

I decided to close my eyes and get lost in the pounding of the music. It was so loud it vibrated against my skin, causing my body to react, to move with it. I could feel my muscles jumping to the beat, making me want to dance.

“Want to take me out for a spin?”

Her sultry voice cut through the noise, causing my whole being to focus on her. Even with my eyes closed, I could feel her aura next to me, enveloping me in its warmth. It’s one of the first things that called me to her. Even being a vampire, being known for being cold, I’ve always felt her fire, her warmth, first. It soothed my soul, making me want to cuddle up inside of her.

I grabbed her hand, lifting her fingers to my lips and kissing each one as I stared into her pinkish golden eyes. “Always and forever.”

Her smile grew, becoming this brilliant thing I wanted to keep for only myself. I was a selfish being of darkness like that,

wanting to keep the light all for myself, but that wasn't the life I was given. I had to share my light with four others.

I looked over her shoulder, seeing Avery watch us. His lazy smile and interested eyes told me he didn't hate what he saw. I lifted my brow, silently asking him if he wanted to join.

"I'll be out in a second. I need to tell the manager that he needs to switch to a better brand of light manufacturer. These are messing with the mood with their inconsistency." I nodded, lifting my rose's hand as I gilded her out onto the dance floor.

There was a giddiness in my heart, making it pump faster as I swung her around, circling my arms behind her as her hips swayed to the beat. It was like living out a dream being out here with her like this. It wasn't too long ago that I would've been watching her through the orb doing this with another man. My fingers gripped into her hips as a possessiveness overtook me. It was me with her now, me. I was living out my dream, and I was never going to let it go. *Never.*

She responded by pushing her ass further into me, bending her back, making it so I could sniff her alluring sugary flower scent, breathing it in so deep I almost moaned. Her scent, her body, her whole being, I couldn't get enough of it. I was such a psycho that I wanted to melt myself into her, her skin soaking me up to be a part of her, never being free of me as we settled in together forever.

She must've felt something in the bond because she huffed out, running her hand along my thigh before turning around in time with the music and placing her body against mine like she was glued there.

"My Lex, have I told you today how incredibly sexy you are?" She ran the tip of her finger along my arm, causing the shadows and smoke to curl around it. "How I'm so happy this inky demon is my mate." My heart started to pound as she placed her lips a hair away from mine. "That you're all *mine*." The way she said "mine" made me half mad as lust burned through my body, lighting my veins up with her possessiveness of me.

She shifted her thighs around my leg, fitting around me as if I was made to be there. Her hand slid up the back of my neck, weaving her fingers into my hair as she pressed herself up against me. Her breathy whispers rendered the loud music obsolete as she cooed, “You’ll never be alone again, my Lex. You and I are tied together forever. This is my promise to you.”

Her hand tightened its grip on my hair in emphasis, and I could feel my resolve cracking. I almost said fuck it when she began rubbing her bare pussy along my thigh, creating a wet spot, letting me know she was ready for me. That she wanted all of me, now.

“Fierce girl, are you trying to start things up without me? I’m hurt.” I almost told him to fuck off when I saw his eyes flash at me, reminding me of what we were doing here in the first place.

He circled her backside, hands on her waist, sandwiching her between us as he swayed with the music. While she kept her body pressed up against mine, she let her head fall back onto his shoulder. Turning into his neck as she laid a kiss right underneath his chin and he shivered.

“You were taking so long. What was a girl to do? I have hot ass mates that get me going by just looking at them. You can’t blame me for that.”

He chuckled, biting his lips as she continued to kiss his neck while rubbing herself on my leg. I gave him a pleading look. I really, really wanted more. Like, it’s a desperate kind of thing. I needed to taste her, touch her, make her pant so hard she could only think about what her body was feeling.

Almost like she could feel our resolve waning, she gripped my bicep with one hand as she stuck her other behind her, and Avery gave a ragged exhale.

Finally, he looked just as desperate as I did, and we began to move her back toward the booth. She let us direct her body easily, keeping her hands and body on us until we got to the booth, and Avery grabbed her throat.

“Come here, you bad girl.” He slammed his lips into hers as he pushed her to sit in the booth, exploring her mouth roughly with his tongue. She moaned, grabbing onto his clothes, pulling him closer as her bottom half was left vulnerable.

I positioned myself, barely having to do any work since it seemed like this skirt was made for a man to go down on his women. I lifted the exposed leg, and she tore herself away from Avery.

“Someone could see us ... ”

Her hesitation, the way her eyes shifted around, made me even happier because I knew why she was doing that. She was worried about my reputation. Even now, she was willing to put me above her own pleasure.

I hooked her leg over my shoulder, making a big show of it. I kissed the inside of her thigh, and her inhale was the sweetest sound. I bit a chunk of her thigh hard, and she cried out loud, Avery’s hands exploring her nipples as I was making my point.

“We run this town, my rose. If I want to fuck you in front of a million people, I can. If I want to share you with your other mates, I can.” I ran my finger along her pussy lips, teasing her as I felt her muscles shake in anticipation. “And if I was to eat out my woman like she’s the first and last meal of my day, then I will fucking eat like a king.”

I spread her with two fingers, exposing her center to me as I gave her one long lick from hole to clit, flicking my tongue at the end. She cried out, but it was cut off by Avery’s mouth, swallowing down her noises like he owned them.

I chuckled against her at him, making her squirm by the vibrations. That was fine. He can claim those damn noises all he wanted because I was going to get the real prize. I was going to claim her cum all over my face.

We worked her up fast and hard between the two of us. Me teasing her with my tongue as he plucked at her nipples and devoured her mouth. It wasn’t long before she was shaking, and I slammed two fingers inside of her.

Her back bent just as I pulled that tender pleasure button between my lips and sucked on it hard. I felt her clench down, but I didn't want my fingers to claim that prize, so I ripped them out of her as I shoved my face into her center and lapped at her cum like a kid at a hose, sucking up as much of her as I could.

I pulled away as she slumped into the booth, panting hard as her hooded eyes glazed over. Both Avery and I were rock hard, but that didn't matter because seeing her like this, this strong and amazing woman trusting us to be putty in our hands, was intoxicating. It made you want more.

Before either of us could make a stupid decision, all three of our phones went off as a text came in.

Cosmo: *Come to the house, now. War room.*

“Well, shit,” Rayla growled, looking like she was going to throw her phone across the room and say fuck it, but instead, she closed her eyes and took a deep breath. When she opened them, a boss shined through. “Sorry, boys, looks like we gotta go.”

Both of us grumbled, making a show of being disappointed and making her promise to continue this after everything was taken care of. Then we split up, deciding to meet her at the house, since she came here on her bike, and we both came in Avery's car.

She gave each of us a long and sensual kiss that let us know she was not done with us before popping on her helmet and jetting off on her bike.

“That was a lot harder than I thought.” Avery huffed, going around the car to the driver's seat.

“Yeah ... but it's going to be worth it.” I slid into the front passenger side as I kept telling myself that because I knew in the end that she would be elated.

“Yeah, sure, at the end, but she's going to be pissed when she gets to the war room and there's nothing there but a note with a clue.” He started the engine, pulling out onto the street and going in the opposite direction that she did.

“I mean yeah, she will be ... especially since we kinda revved her up. She’s going to feel like we left her high and dry.” That was the only part of this plan that I didn’t like because our mate had a mean streak, and you never knew what kind of punishment she would hand out.

“Let’s hope your plan works.”

His half-hearted positivity had me frowning at him. It had to be worth it. She has been wanting something like this for a while. I just needed to trust the process.

“You’ll see. This is going to be perfect.” *At Least, I hope it will.*

CHAPTER 2



WHAT A FUCKING TIME to call in a problem, but I guess it can't be helped. Cosmo rarely has to send out an SOS like that, so it must be serious.

I hopped off my bike, beating Lex and Avery home like I knew I would. I kept trying to get Avery, Cosmo, and Falcon to ride with me, but that didn't seem to be happening any time soon. They kept insisting on their big fancy cars, their luxury. Well, if they rode with me, we would be here at the same time.

Making my way through the door, I expected one of them to be waiting for me at the stairs, but no one was there. At the very least, I expected Rick to come running up to me, demanding that I give him more answers for the wedding. Parties like that didn't really interest me, and he had been dying to plan one for years, so I told him to go crazy. The only thing was I wanted it on new year's eve. As soon as the new year ran in at twelve, I wanted to start my new life with my new husbands.

I didn't hear a single peep as I made my way through the foyer. *Weird. Maybe they didn't hear me.*

Going up the steps slowly and loudly, I hoped that one of them would realize I was here and come see me. Cosmo might be

getting ready for everyone, so I didn't expect him. Maybe Falcon still wasn't here? Maybe Ax's flight got delayed?

The creaking of the wooden stairs echoed in the silence, and it irked me. Something felt off. Wrong.

I began to look around for signs of any disturbance or issue. I was on guard the rest of the way to the war room, taking out my switchblade just in case, expecting anything to pop out at me at a moment's notice.

I swung open the door to the war room like I was coming in ready to fight a horde. My head snapped around the room, expecting either something horrible or to have Cosmo sitting there looking at me like a loony for the way I was acting. I was surprised when neither happened as nothing dangerous was waiting here for me, nor was Cosmo waiting. The whole room was empty.

Turning, I was about to stomp all over this house to find them when I noticed something on the table. A white piece of paper glaring at me with its brightness. I snatched it up and scanned over the contents, my expression growing more slack with each word I read.

My lovely, gorgeous mate,

As you know, Christmas is around the corner, and our alone time is quickly coming to an end (with our fathers coming to stay with us), so we wanted to take this opportunity to give you a special gift. One that will awaken multiple senses and bring you to the highest peak.

As we know you to be a brutal, vicious woman, we thought that starting this off with a hunt would get you in the mood.

Each place will have a note from one of us with an item that's a clue. If you look on the chair this paper was on, you'll see your first clue.

I promise you that this will all be worth your while ... just trust us.

Come find us, fierce girl. We're not so patiently waiting for you.

Love you beyond words,

Avery Glovefox

At first, I crumpled the paper in my hand as fury at being tricked filled me with a fire that could burn this house down. Thinking back on the last few hours, they must've had Avery and Lex play decoy while the others planned and executed.

It was strange to be the one not in control, not even included. I didn't really like the feeling.

Glancing back down at the note, I saw the last words again, and my brain clicked on. If they were all waiting on me, this meant that they planned all this together ... for me.

I know they were a little pissed about the escape room incident, but it was hard to be sorry about it when they all seemed to respect each other more, able to work together better, and irritate each other just a bit less. For me, it was a win.

So, maybe I was thinking about this all wrong.

Instead of being pissed about not being a part of this, I could enjoy the fact that they worked together. They made a well-thought out plan to give me a joint gift. Also, Avery was right. Our dads will be in tomorrow, and knowing them, they'll be early ... so, this really was the last time to celebrate just the six of us

Taking a deep breath, I put the piece of paper on the table and tried my best to flatten it out. It was really a nice note, I just let my emotions run wild. Especially since my instincts were running on high alert and I thought something bad was happening.

Looking over the note again, they must've known that I was going to be out for blood at first, making my smooth talker fairy the first note I receive. It's both refreshing and annoying that they know me so well.

A sudden thought hit me. Maybe I could reach them through the bond, find out where they were without the whole seek and find game. Closing my eyes, I took a breath, finding my center where the five mate bonds connected to my soul. I subtly tried

to lay my hand on each golden string, but there was a thin layer of magic protecting each one, preventing me from connecting.

This normally would've freaked me out, but there was something familiar about this magic. As I inspected it closer, it gave off a cold, electrical pop that I knew instantly to be Falcon's magic, and I smiled. That smart mage of mine had thought of all the angles. So, it seems they wanted to play hardball.

I opened my eyes and went straight for the chair where Avery's note talked about having a clue to the next location. Apparently, I would be playing this the clean way until I saw an opportunity to get around the rules.

Pulling the chair out, my clue fell down and rolled on the leather seat before I snatched it up. The small, smooth brass bullet had me falling into memories of the last time I was at the gun range with them, and they all were impressed with mine and Falcon's accuracy. I teased them, telling them all they needed to do was spend more time at the range, but they each started giving excuses for why they didn't have the time.

Closing my fist around the bullet, I stalked off, heading for the door to get back on my bike because my hunt was just beginning. I was going to find these wayward mates, and when I did, their damn present better be fucking amazing.



I walked into Larry's, immediately grabbing everyone's attention in the room. My eyes traveled the room, trying to find the one fucker that could make this stop easier for me.

A shiny bald head peaked out from the counter he was hiding behind. The guy Larry must've been talking to gave me a shifty look like he was trying to not give up his location. What the fuck did they think? That I didn't have eyes that could pick up that flesh-colored tray table next to the counter?

I slid next to the guy who had given me shifty eyes and laughed, tucking my hair behind my ear before I gushed,

“Wow, a TP9 Elite SC ...,” I picked up the gun in front of him, holding it up to the fluorescent light above. “Now, this is a good one if you like 9mm. Has excellent accuracy, superior trigger, and it’s nice and compact for concealed carry.” I set the gun down with a clank, causing that bald head to shake.

I glared at it for a second before reaching behind me and pulling out my Beretta PX4 Storm. “Now, this one is a beauty. Soft recoil, accurate night sights, and you can get an extended mag on this baby.” I put the cool metal against my cheek, closing my eyes for a second to relish the new gun Cosmo got me that Falcon tricked out.

I rushed to snap my eyes open, the customer now looking at me with a wide-eyed expression that said he wanted to get away from me as fast as possible, so I smiled even wider. “Some people wanted to complain about the grip, but all I think of when idiots talk about that is they’ve never held a dick in their hands before.” I kept my eyes on the customer as I swung my gun around, pointing it at the bald shaking head. “Don’t you think so, Larry?”

He immediately popped up, hand in the air as sweat was beading down his face. “Oh, Miss Rayla! It’s so wonderful to see you!” His fake exuberance was comical as he wrung his hands together, his eyes firmly glued to the gun pointed at him.

“Now, Larry, you know me. I don’t have much time to play around, and I’ve been a very loyal customer so ... ” I changed my voice from light and fun, down a few octaves to downright menacing, “Now, where is my fucking note and clue. I don’t have time to search for it all night so just hand it over.”

His body trembled again. “Miss Rayla, I beg of you. Your mates told me they would slit my throat if I told you where it was.” When I cocked the hammer back, he gasped loudly. “Um ... so ...” he looked around, eyes zeroed in on his log-in book, and he slid it over, pointing to the number eight on the list, then turned and looked at the stalls.

I put my gun away, gave him a bright smile as I asked, “They have a listening device in here, don’t they?” His eyes shifted to

the upper right corner of the room. Squinting my eyes, I could see a faint blue shimmer, which, to me, meant Falcon used some magic to not only have eyes and ears in this place, but also, to hide the fact that they had eyes on me.

I swiftly picked up the TP9 Elite SC off the counter and shot at the corner. Everyone in the shop turned and looked at me, gasped, eyes wide in shock, but I kept mine on the corner. The magic barrier fell down first, then the bullet hit the black metal device that was hanging on the wall.

Putting the gun down, I softly called out, “Don’t worry about them. I’ll make sure nothing happens to you.” I winked at Larry before zooming over to stall number eight.

My eyes searched for the note and clue, but it wasn’t hard to find. Right there on the gun ledge was a clipboard with a folded up piece of paper on it. I scoffed, snatching the note out of the teeth of the clipboard and opened it.

Siren,

Before you go all Rambo on us for having Falcon put up some of his techy stuff, just hear us out ... we knew you would cheat. It’s in your blood. We don’t blame you for it, but we definitely knew that you would use everything you possibly could, every trick up your sleeve, to get the answers as fast as possible. We had to fight back with a little something.

Anyways, just know that for every infraction we see, we will take it out on your hide when we see you ... but I promise you’ll enjoy it. ;)

Also, don’t scare Larry too badly ... he might pee his pants if you do ... on the other hand, maybe you should ... that would be funny to get on tape.

Love you to the moon and back,

Ax Rossey

P.S. Oh, yeah ... and the clue is in your hands.

I couldn’t help the silly girl grin on my face as I smiled down at the note. I’m fucking keeping these. These notes are adorable, but also for a little blackmail. I could see it now, Ax

getting the upper hand in some argument, and I pulled out the, “Are you sure I didn’t cheat? It’s in my blood, right?!” I could picture it now, his face falling in defeat.

They probably thought I would throw them away since I’m not terribly sentimental about stuff, but, oh, yeah, baby, I’m keeping these.

Mumbling to myself, “Now, on to the clue ... the note said in my hand ...” I was still holding the clipboard, but how was that a clue? I looked around again, trying and failing to find anything else.

Pinching my lips, I began to inspect the clipboard. It looked fairly normal to me until I turned it around and saw the Syndicate logo etched into it. I knew where this came from, the Syndicate labs.

Stuffing the note into my back pocket, I ran out the room, stopped by Larry, and sniffed. No. He didn’t pee his pants. Why was I kinda bummed about that?

I waved goodbye and told him we would be by for our regular time next week. He hesitated as he waved back, but then smiled and nodded. He knew it was better to be on our good side than bad.



I raced over to the storage units, went down into the underground lab, and was prepared to make a ruckus. That was what these lab coats hated the most.

I stomped my way through the main hallway made up of glass offices, trying to find one of the lab coats here and give them a chance to help me before I started to break things. I saw a short, thin fairy woman with bright red hair hurry her way over to me, eyes filled with determination and perseverance. He must’ve warned them about me. It was cute.

She stopped a few feet away from me, crossing her arms over her chest as she calmly said, “Miss Rayla, before you go on a rampage, Mr. Winstale told us to tell you what you are looking for is in his office.” She swung one arm over to the larger

office at the end of the hallway, motioning for me to follow her.

Like I didn't know where my man fucking worked. My eye twitched before I took a deep breath and smiled as I nodded.

“So, what is it that you do here?” I tried in a calm voice, which she bristled at. I'm guessing she was prepared for a raging lunatic. I'll be having some words with Falcon about that later, but I was more interested in the woman in front of me at the moment.

“Oh ... well, I am head of the chemistry department. Anything that handles chemicals has to go through me for approval.” She gazed over at me, my whole attention solely on her as my eyes grew wide, and I whistled. She quickly looked away, but I saw the red on her cheeks.

We stopped in front of his office. She held out her hand to open the door, but I interrupted her as I turned to face her. “That's impressive, Miss ...” I made a show of looking for her name badge, grabbing it to see her name, “Miss Yarisha. What a beautiful name, and so unique. Does it mean anything special?”

She blinked a few times, her eyes turning a purplish hue as she mumbled, “It means light of beauty in the old fae language.”

I tilted my head, taking a step closer to her to get in her space bubble as I cupped her face and tilted it up. “Mmm, yes. I can see how you give your name justice.” I could feel her pulse beat faster as she gulped, stumbling over her next words as her eyes were glued to mine.

“Um ... I ... I ... meeean, I dddon't kkknow ... ”

I gave her my charming smile, one that showed off a bit of fang before I let her go and grabbed the handle to Falcon's office door. “Take the compliment, Yari. I'm sure we will be seeing more of each other. And keep up the good work. We want to make sure to keep smart women like you on the payroll.” She nodded and thanked me, scurrying off as her whole face turned red, and I chuckled.

The watch on my hand started to ring, the one that Falcon made for all of us so we could easily get a hold of each other. I tapped on the screen, and a blue light beamed out from it, showing me Falcon's face. His pinched brows and deep frown made my insides giddy.

"Rayla. What do you think you're doing?" His sharp tone made a spiral of sparks light up inside of me.

Pretending to not know what he was talking about as I lifted up a notebook, flipping pages that obviously didn't have a clue in it, I made a show of looking though it before throwing it over my shoulder. "I don't know what you're talking about ... can you clarify?"

Falcon's eyes narrowed, trying his hardest not to show his emotions, but I saw that vein pop in his neck. He was getting a little frustrated. "With Miss Vera. I'm talking about your interaction with Miss Vera."

Pinching my whole face, pretending not to know the name as I turned over his chair, "Vera ... Vera" His whole face darkened, and I felt like I needed to let up the act. "Oh! You mean my new friend Yari! Is that who you're talking about? She's such a lovely and smart woman. I was just complimenting her."

He huffed just as his face disappeared, and Ax's angry face was shown. "Yeah right, Siren. We saw the whole thing, and that looked like a lot more than just a compliment!"

I sat down on Falcon's desk, about to come up with some other excuse, when I heard Cosmo's voice cut in, "Ray." Even with his face not on the screen, I could hear his don't-fuck-with-us-anymore tone, and I rolled my eyes.

"Fine. I put it on a little thick." I pinched my fingers together to say it really wasn't that much, and I heard Ax scoff, mouth open, ready to yell at me, when Falcon took back over. I saw a few files on his desk, raised my foot, and toed them over the edge. Papers scattered all over his office floor. Oops.

"Are you going to explain why?" His tone was much calmer, like he was okay now that he knew I wasn't serious about the

damn women.

“You know, if you didnt cut off the bond, you would’ve saved yourself a lot of grief.” I tried to get around his question, but it was no use with the my mage. He didn’t play easily into my games.

“Uh huh. So, about that explanation ... ?”

I threw up one hand, making an exacerbated sigh as I mumbled out, “I might’ve had a momentary lapse of judgment and got a little jealous.”

Falcon’s lips twitched like he desperately wanted to smile, but if he did, he knew I would be more pissed. I still heard the snickers from the others.

“So, you flirted with the woman because you were jealous of her?” His tone was questioning like he still didn’t get it. *Did I have to spell it out for him?!* He usually was smarter than this.

“Look! You have this smart, hot, chemistry lady working with you day and night, and I got just a tad territorial, but I understand that having a smart and capable woman is important for us soooo,” I gave him a crooked grin, “if she’s crushing on me, then she’s not crushing on you.”

The rest of them must’ve heard it because Lex suddenly came into the picture. “My rose, I see the logic, and I commend you for it. Truly brilliant. But if I have to deal with any more lustful eyes pointed at you, male or female, I think I’m going to go on a killing spree.” While his voice made it seem like he didn’t want to do that, his eyes were sparkling in delight, just waiting for his moment to shine.

I could tell that Falcon yanked the watch back over to him as I heard Avery in the background, “See this is all your fault! You hired some hottie science lady, and now we have to worry about women!”

Falcon’s face was turned toward the side, I think speaking to Avery as he tried to cover himself. “I don’t even work closely with this woman. I see her once a month at the department meetings, that’s it! I don’t even let anyone work with me

anymore because they just get in the way. Other than signing a few documents, I keep to myself.”

While they were fighting about it, I saw a cool, shiny thing on a podium, and I lurched forward. What cool new project was he working on? Right before my fingers touched it, I heard Falcon bark, “Don’t touch that! It’s not ready, and if you touch the wrong spot, that whole room will be filled with a flesh-eating gas!”

Yanking my fingers back, I turned back to his panicked face, grinned, and nodded toward it, “So, when that’s finished, I want one.”

He closed his eyes and took a breath. I think I really scared him with that one. I wonder how powerful that flesh-eating gas was?

“How about you stop destroying my office and look in the top drawer for the note and next clue like a normal person.”

I giggled as I exaggerated my excitement. “Ooohhhh, so that’s where it is.”

Hearing the others making jabs at his expense, he followed up with, “Never again. We are never hiding something in my office again.” I truly laughed. I would find another reason to come in here and mess things up. I enjoyed seeing my straight and narrow man get his feathers ruffled. It made for some great punishment sex.

“Find your clue and get going. We are apparently not good at waiting.” Cosmo huffed and hung up the phone.

I did as I was told, opened the drawer, and found another note with a coupon to Nana’s Mexican food. Ooohhhh, I was excited for my next stop.

My dearest, most beautiful rose,

You are the crimson queen that makes my veins pump to life. The only being in this world that could cause me to fall flat on my face to worship you. Everything about you is perfect and amazing. I wish my life was only to be by your side, staring at you and your splendor for eternity.

You are the beat that makes my soul sing and the driving force that makes me get up for the night. Your bloody ways make my pants hard and my mind alight with ideas. The way bones break under you, how your fangs slice into my skin, how you rule with both your mind and your heart is inspiring.

I don't know what these fools wrote in their notes, but the next stop is Nana's if you didn't understand my clue ... but I doubt it because you are just as smart as you are beautiful.

Come find me soon, my everything!

Your sexy stalker,

Lex Devil

Damn. That man makes me swoon. I swear. His devotion and absolute love and trust in me sometimes scares me, but I'm so thankful for it because I know he'll always be on my side no matter what. I know they all do now, but Lex was always the first to line up right behind me, no questions asked. There was something magical about his unwavering loyalty.

Well, it looks like I'm going to Nana's. I hope she'll have something good waiting for me because I'm starving.

CHAPTER 3



I ROLLED UP TO Nana's restaurant that looked like a home straight from the barrio. That immediate waft of Mexican goodness filled my nose as soon as I took my helmet off. I could live off that scent. There was never a time that this familiar smell didn't calm and soothe me. Make me think of happy days of being carefree underneath the thumb of my very protective Nana.

"What are you doing, Mijita? Ven, ven. Muy es frío!"

The light from the restaurant cut through the dead of night, Nana at the door waving me in as she was scolding me. I laughed as I hurried to her side. She stuck out her cheek, and I obliged, giving her a peck and going into the house.

The restaurant was booming, filled with supes and humans enjoying their meals and yacking away. As long as you enjoyed her food, Nana's was always open to you. That and the Syndicate was protecting this place, so Nana could do pretty much whatever she wanted without repercussions. She says it's not needed, but I secretly know she likes the power of having us behind her.

"Let's go to the kitchen. I'll have your food ready soon." She smiled as she passed me, making a beeline for the kitchen, and

I was not one to pass up a meal at Nana's. The boys would just have to wait.

Smirking, I looked around, trying to find one of their little peeping devices. As she held open the door to the kitchen, she smirked and asked, "You looking for el pájaro's juguete? I told him no. He can't stick things on my walls! No. Take his pequeño acecho juguete and put it afuera." She motioned to the outside.

I threw my arms around her, hugging her tight as I whispered, "Only you, Nana. Sólo tu."

She patted my back before she called out, "Chicko! Trae su plato!" Then she turned to me. "Siéntate, siéntate. Comer algo de comida."

Following orders, I sat down in the corner where she had a small two-person table waiting. It didn't take long for a steaming plate of chilaquiles to appear, and I dug into it like an animal. Nana sat down across from me, two milky white glasses in hand as she slid one over to me. I licked my lips, ready to gulp down my horchata when Nana pulled out a few mini bottles of rum and poured one in each.

"Lo hace mejor." I nodded, knowing that you never disagree with her unless you want to fight it all the way, with the possibility of getting kicked out ... and you never wanted that.

We both took a drink at the same time, the sweet cinnamon paired with the sharp caramel and vanilla notes of the rum was perfect. Warming my belly and my soul.

After I took a few more bites, I spoke up. "So, do you have any idea what the boys are up to?"

She huffed, taking a long drink before responding. "Those traviesos came in telling me they were doing a buscar y encontrar for you." She wiggled her brows at me with a crooked smile, "Es muy romantico."

I huffed and rolled my eyes. "Sure. Make me go trouncing all over the city just to get a present. Super romantic."

She scoffed, snapping the towel over her shoulder out at me, hitting me with it. “You can’t hide from me, mijita. La emoción, la anticipación. I know that deep, deep down you know it is.” She winked at me, and I pursed my lips to the side before I nodded, not wanting to say it out loud, even if I knew she was right.

I was Rayla Desmond. I couldn’t be caught getting all giddy and googly about my mates putting in some extra effort for me. I also didn’t know what it was, and that was slowly killing me. The only reason I’m not raising hell was because my mates put a lot of work into this. The notes, the clues, making sure I was distracted while they prepped. It was all quite impressive.

Scarfig down my last few bites, I nodded. “You’re right, Nana, like always.” She beamed at that until I followed with, “So, can you tell me where they hid the note and clue?”

“Ey chingasos!” She threw up her hands to the ceiling, and I tried my hardest not to laugh. “If you weren’t my favorite ...” She folded her arms, throwing her chin in the direction of a chip warmer. “That’s it! Es todo! You use that big, strong, boss chica brain of yours to figure the rest out.”

It didn’t take long to see a note and a piece of see-through fabric taped to the back of the machine, and I tore it down, opening the note and devouring its contents.

Wild One,

It has been enjoyable setting this up for you. I find that with each day that passes, I am learning more and more about the things I do and don’t like outside of the lab. I have you to thank for that.

While I might not have wanted a mate, my neutralizer, when I met you, I thank the universe for giving you to me all the same. I know now that my life would be dull and lifeless without you. Even with you getting under my skin and poking at my need for things to be just right, I find that when I don’t have you around me, bugging me, I miss it.

Figure out the clue soon as the next will be your last stop before we get to see you again. Waiting is such sweet sorrow.

Your mate,

Falcon Winstale

P.S. Don't be too mad at me for the magical bond coverage. It will be gone by the time you see us again, but we knew you would try to use it to find us. It's smart, but also cheating.

I swear, if I didn't train myself to keep my feelings locked up tight, tears would be falling down right now. He may not think that I know, but I do. I know how hard it was for him to write something like this, and it made my heart pound faster.

A rising need to see my mates and attack their faces with mine was slowly becoming a thrumming need, an ache for them was building in the worst of ways. I needed to focus on the game, then I could devour them with all my might.

I clutched the shiny piece of fabric in my hand. Of course, Falcon's clue was not blatant or obvious. He just had to be the difficult one that followed the rules. I ran my thumb along the silky fibers, trying to figure out where I had seen this before.

It was buttery soft, so smooth that it was pleasant to the touch. It gave off a warmth without being thick or coarse. It was slightly see-through, giving it the illusion of coverage without actually covering anything. I twisted it around, the shiny strands sparkling in the light, giving off a kind of glitz and glamor to it.

I got it! I remembered the last time I saw this kind of fabric. It's the same kind of fabric that Veshta uses for her curtains on her stage. Not the first or last ones, but the middle ones. The ones she had when she was putting on a sexy show.

Kissing Nana on the cheek, I ran out the door. "Tell the mojito's I say hi!" She said to my back, laughing as she hollered, "And give each one a beso from Nana!"



As soon as I parked my bike in front of her place, her door man came up to me, hand out. “I will keep the bike running, Miss Rayla. Veshta is expecting you.”

I nodded, not taking a moment to ask him how he knew any of that, knowing that Veshta had her voodoo magic way of knowing everything and planning for it.

Racing up her steps and busting my way in, I looked around furiously, trying to figure out where I was going to start my search first when this place was so big. My note and clue could be any-fucking-where!

Before I could tear this place apart, I heard a voice call out, “Rayla. Come with me.”

I turned to see Veshta in all her glory. Her dark hair was up in an immaculate classy bun, looking both loose and graceful when I knew that she had her own hair and make-up person. Her makeup was light and effortless, highlighting her natural beauty. There were only a handful of fairies that didn’t use illusion magic to do their makeup and faces daily. She was just stunning all on her own.

Avery told me that she was of a noble fairy bloodline, one that dated back to the beginning. A family who had given their life in service to the fairy royal line, but since the awakening, Syris had excused her from that role and told her to instead be his friend. With the way they squabbled, you would think they were old enemies, but I guess that was how they showed their appreciation to each other. Go figure.

I looked back at the room with a quizzical glance as she said, “Is that how the next generation is going to treat old friends? How disappointing.”

Her tone made me realize that this was not an optional appointment, and I turned and followed her. “Of course not, Veshta. You’ve always been an integral part of the Syndicate and deserve our utmost respect. Please, let’s go to your office to visit first.”

I tried to phrase it how I knew fairies liked. They always wanted to be schmoozed, wined & dined, be fed compliments

before ever getting to the meat and potatoes of a conversion. It was exhausting and made me think of Avery. How he would be great at doing this part while I waited for mine, which was usually the threatening or laying out all the options part. We all played to our strengths.

Her wide smile made me confident that I picked the right way to go about this, and I followed her to her office.

“Did you know that those boys just cut up that corner of my curtain fabric without my permission?”

Her accusing tone had me grimace. Yikes, guys! Let’s not make the scary fairy lady pissed at us.

“Im so sor-”

She lifted her hand. “Don’t worry about it. I got them all to promise to put on a show one night. Just one with all of them in the act.”

I bristled at the thought of all of my mates up on stage, taking their clothes off for other men and women. I mean, it would be sexy as fuck because my mates were ripped, but that ugly seed of jealousy started to take root again as I tried desperately to shove it down.

I responded with clenched teeth, “If that’s their punishment, then so be it.”

She sharply turned around, the pashmina she had draped along both arms flew around in a half circle, almost whipping me with her speed. “Really, Rayla? You will let me do that?” She smiled before putting her hand to her lips as she exaggerated her next words. “I guess you’re not one of those possessive mates. Wanting to make sure that no other woman got her filthy, greedy, fingers all over her man. I understand.”

This was a test, and I knew it.

“You know as well as I do, they are their own men, they can and will face each reward and consequence that comes with their actions.” She nodded, her lips twitching as she kept her eyes forward, and I continued. “So, yes. They would be doing whatever you saw fit for the infraction, but know this. If it’s a ticketed event, I will buy all of them, making this show a

personal one for myself, or I'll be in the front row, keeping an eye on those thirsty bitches.”

Anger rose to the forefront as I envisioned some of the women feasting their greedy little eyes on what was mine. They can fucking look all they wanted, but if they thought they could touch them, stick dollars on them, I would slice off any hand that tried. I fucking dare them to do it.

She sniffed the air, smiling as she turned back around. “Well, then that settles it. I didn't think I would even get that far with someone newly mated, but you proved me wrong. You should pat yourself on the back, not a lot of people can say they'd have reacted the same.”

She opened the door to her office, directing me in, and I sat in the chair across from her. She moved around her desk lithely, and I kept my smile up. She laughed as she sat down and folded her hands on the desk.

“It would most definitely be a money maker. I could see it now.” Her hands widened like she could see the sign. “The Syndicate brothers all in flashing red lights! It would be a hit, and I could give you a cut?” Her question sparked my rage, and she must've seen something in my eyes as she backtracked.

“But, alas, I don't want to make an enemy of the one who runs the Syndicate, so I will come up with another sort of punishment.”

I tried to keep my feelings locked up, soothing the mate bond that was vibrating on my side, before I responded honestly. “If they offended you, there should be some repercussions, but,” I winced at my careful admission, “my territorial mate side is having issues picturing it all.”

Her face crafted this beautiful and full smile, lighting up her eyes as she flew out of her seat in a flash, and the next thing I knew, her arms snatched out, grabbed me into a huge hug. “I'm so glad Avery has you. You're just the type of girl he needs.”

I mumbled into her luscious hair that smelled like sexy dreams and sweet nights. “Um ... thank you.”

She pushed my shoulders back, looking me in the face. “Such a beautiful and fierce woman should be showered daily by her mates. I’m glad that they chose to do something special for you.”

“And do you know what that something special is?” She was my last hope at finding out some answers, but she shook her head.

“No. They didn’t tell me anything. Came barging in here looking around for a while before I caught them in the act of cutting up my curtains.” She looked away as her face furrowed and she whispered, “Damn boys thought they could do it without me knowing.”

She turned to me again, face immediately going back to smiley, light, and beautiful. Her eyes softened as she cupped my cheek. “You look just like your mother. So beautiful and strong. The only one who could put Ternin and Syris in their places.” She giggled, getting a far off look like she was remembering something, but my mind snagged on one piece of her sentence.

“I know she did that to my dad, but ... Syris?” My question had her backing up a step as her eyes shifted away from me.

“Damn ... I didn’t ... I mean, we all agreed” She fumbled over her words, which was odd because I’ve only known Veshta to be strong, elegant, and graceful. *Are all the bosses and Veshta hiding something from me? Something about my mom?*

I squared my shoulders, calmed my voice as I asked her, “What did my mother have to do with Syris?”

She looked away, her jaw clenched before she sighed and turned back to me. “This is something that we all agreed not to talk about after you were born, but given your current status, I’m sure you could understand. Syris and Ternin were both in love with your mother. While she did end up picking your

father, it tore her up inside that she had to choose, as she had deep feelings for Syris, too.”

My mind was blown for a second, reeling with this new information. I mean, my dad and Syris were the best of buds now, I’ve never known them to fight unless it was over silly stuff like booze and who was prettier.

I suddenly remembered this look Syris had given me a few times. It was only for a split second, so at first, I thought I was just making it up in my mind, but he would give me a sad, forlorn look. I never understood it until I thought about what happened before he gave me those kinds of looks. It was right after my dad mentioned how much I was like my mom.

It all started to click. Even their silly fights all the time. Maybe that was their way to get out their frustration without breaking up their bond. Without breaking up the Syndicate over it. Then I thought about my situation, and I wondered

“Why didn’t both of them be with her if they loved her so much?”

Veshta’s smiled turned sad, her tone lowered. “When the Awakening happened, there was a lot of unrest in the supernatural communities. A lot of daily fighting with humans, fighting for their place in the world. So much unrest and uncertainty. Ternin, Syris, Easton, Manic, and Raythe all stood up together first, making themselves the leaders for the community by just stepping forward. They’re each other’s strength. Balancing each other, but the community was vicious then.” She shook her head as she sat down on her desk.

“A lot of sub families trying to take over, a lot of infighting. Back then, their enemies would use any kind of situation to create propaganda, trying to turn the communities against them.” Her eyes focused on me, trying to get me to understand. “Just imagine what would’ve happened if they got word that *one human girl* was able to capture the hearts of two of our leaders? They would’ve had a field day, and since Ternin was able to change her into a vampire . . . it was just the best option for everyone at the time.”

Her words circled in my brain, and while I understood it, I felt bad for all of them. I couldn't imagine not being able to be with all of my guys. I would miss them too much to be separated.

She grabbed my hand, giving it a squeeze. "But it's different for you six. Not only are you all mates, which is respected above everything in our community, but you're all coming into power at a time while the Syndicate has a tight hold over everything. And while everything that happened with Vincent was difficult, it showed the communities that you six are a solid team that can't be broken. That you six, even with your unorthodox relationship, only strengthen the Syndicate."

I heard everything she said, absorbing it all as my mind was going round and round with the information. She patted my hand before letting go.

"Anyways, you're here for the clue, right?"

I nodded, slightly dazed as I replied, "Yes."

She popped up off her desk, going to her drawer as she pulled out a folded piece of paper and slid it over to me before settling her chin on her hands. "While this all must be a lot to take in, remember that this is all in the past. Everyone is fine, and it has all worked out in the end. You and the boys are the future."

She was right. While I felt like this was all shocking, and I was still a little curious, me and my mates were the future. We were the ones that would ring in a different kind of Syndicate. One that was not going to let anyone get in our way or threaten our foothold because if they did, we would eviscerate them. That fact was one that me and my mates all agreed on to the fullest.

I let go of my thoughts about the past, stuffing them in the back of my mind in order to be present for my men who were waiting for me. The story only makes me even more proud and happy to have what I got.

My fingers curled around the note before opening it.

My Ray,

Know that you have always been my whole world. Ever since the day I saw your shining, sassy light come through those gaudy mansion doors. It took a while for you to warm up to me, but I'd always been happy to just be by your side.

Then that night happened, the one that changed our lives forever, and I panicked. I let fear control my actions, and I shamefully hid our bond. Hid our deeper connection. I will forever be making that up to you. Forever be grateful that these others and their marks forced me to make the right choice. To stand next to your side with pride as not your brother, but your mate.

You are the only one that makes my heart pump, my mind dizzy with worry, and my body wracked with lust for you. While the Syndicate may be of the highest priority for you, for me, you are number one and always will be.

This is the last stop on this hunt. Meet us at the coordinates 36.639688, -115.201709.

Be ready.

Forever your knight,

Cosmo Desmond

I shot up, my heart beating out of my chest as my feet moved for me as I went to the door, Veshta's voice calling out behind me, "Good luck, darling. I have a sneaky feeling you're going to need it."

CHAPTER 4



I SLICED MY CLAWS into a large boulder for the sixth time, my claws carving into the stone as the grinding sound focused my mind. I'm going crazy just waiting here. Waiting for my siren to show up so that the fun can start.

Who the fuck's idea was this again? Oh, right. Lex. His crazy ass that was used to holding back and waiting. He had so much damn patience it could last for fucking years. I wasn't built like that. This waiting was slowly killing me in anticipation, and I needed something to keep my mind off what was to come.

"Is it a self-portrait?" I growled toward Lex's cocky tone, already on edge and ready to fight someone. He stood there in his all black outfit like that was the only clothing he owned. For all I knew, it was, but for the interest of the event today, all of us were to wear black and non-distinct shoes.

"Naw, that looks like the chicken scratch of a wolfish love letter. Is that for our love?" Avery flew next to Lex like they were best buds, which was only when they liked to gang up on me. Dicks.

My muscles bunched as I felt them bulk out, my skin taught as it stretched around the growth. I was letting my wolf come out to have a little play. Maybe I could let him carve up these two,

hoping that we had enough time for them to heal before Rayla arrived. I knew she would be pissed if she showed up and they were all scratched up.

“Quit it. Look. She’s on her way.” Falcon’s glacier voice cut through as he shoved his tablet in our faces. Our mate was on her bike, riding like the fires of hell were licking at her feet as she turned off on the dirt road. She’ll be here soon. My wolf purred in my chest, letting me know his excitement at having his mate close to him. He was ready to stretch out his legs and have some fun with his mate.

Falcon took it back and hit a few buttons before throwing it into the passenger seat. “It’s time.” He flicked his fingers over his car, reciting out a few words three times before the cars all shimmered to disappear before our eyes.

“How long have you been able to do that?!” Avery’s shocked voice said as his eyes widened comically, and he pointed to his non-existent car. Falcon rolled his eyes, pinching his lips before narrowing his eyes in his we-don’t-have-time-for-this look. We got that one so often that it was easy to spot now.

Cosmo, usually the one to not get in between many of the bickering fests we had, was the first to join Avery’s side. “For once, I actually agree with the winged fucker. This could’ve been useful.”

Cosmo’s glare made Falcon’s frown deepen before Lex chimed in. “He probably didn’t even think about it until we started to make plans for this game. You know he makes the best stuff for Rayla.” When Falcon’s cheeks turned red and his eyes shifted, Lex clapped his hands and hooted out, “I’m right! Oh, man. I think I should start keeping track of all the times I’m right. Like, I need one of those detective notepads that I can keep in my back pocket.” He flattened his palm, pretending like he had one of those notepads and a pen now.

“Lex, one hundred and fifty-six. Avery, surprisingly, fifteen.” He gave him a thumbs up before looking back to his hand. “Falcon, twenty. But we all knew that.” He rolled his eyes before continuing. “Ax, like, two.” His gaze pointed at me. “You know why.” I closed my fist, thinking about how good it

would feel if I sank my claws into his gut and ripped it all out. I bet he would bleed so good.

“And Cosmo ... One.” He grinned to himself as Cosmo glared at him like he could kill him with just his eyes. Lex didn’t even look up when he pointed at Cosmo. “I can feel that. Now it’s a negative one. Keep that up, and I’ll have to move you to a negative two.”

Cosmo’s face twisted up, his fists balled, and he took a step forward before Avery flew in front of him with his hands out. “Don’t. We’re running out of time, and Falcon still has to put the rune spells on us. Deal with it later or, you know, or never ... It’s Lex.” Avery shrugged like that explains everything, and while it was infuriating to hear it did make you re-evaluate why even engage with him when he was so slippery with his shadows and would just try to get on your nerves again. It was better to just ignore him ... if you could.

Falcon sighed as he marched past all of us. “Clearing, now. Then I can magic you all. Hurry up.” All of us quickly followed Falcon, not wanting to miss out on a major part of the plan.

We walked in silence, but my wolf began to pick up on all of the nocturnal creatures making noises. It had been six months, and my wolf and I felt like we’d barely made a dent in learning about our new home and surroundings. Dust kicked up at my feet as I saw the shining eyes of a bobcat watching us. I learned really quickly that the desert forests of Nevada were definitely different from the lush forests in Montana. Everything here was so dry. Even the woodland trees were thin and sparse, not creating a lot of ground foliage. Also, the bushes here were just as big as some trees, but could offer a lot more coverage.

Hunting in these kinds of woods would be different than the full, dewy ones I was used to ... but the one thing that you couldn’t get elsewhere were the amazing sunsets. Miles of clear skies filled with pinks, yellows, oranges, and purples, so vivid it was like someone painted it. You could see all of it in its full glory, casting its lights throughout the whole sky, all the way to the horizon.

Little kangaroo rats scurried beside us into a thorny bush for safety. I took a second, calling my wolf forward, and I leaned up to the sky and gave a large howl, warning all the animals around that there was a hunt going on nearby, and if they didn't want to get caught up in it, they needed to take cover.

We finally came to the clearing. Cosmo and I had moved the trajectory of the dirt road to veer off and come to a stop at this very clearing. It took a lot of work, but it was essential. She might already be pissed at us for the cameras, the secrecy, but this would all be worth it when she gets here. Then the real fun could start.

My wolf surged forward, his excitement at this plan of ours was overflowing my body. Now that the time was here my body shook as he tried to force a shift. I closed my eyes, focusing on my human body and keeping it in place. He whined in my head while I reminded him that for this to work, I was not going to be able to do a full shift. To keep things as anonymous as we could, I needed to keep my human body for this hunt, but that didn't mean that I couldn't use my wolf eyes, strength, and nose. He needed to be satisfied with that.

He huffed at me, swiping a claw at me in my head, but didn't take it further, reluctantly agreeing with me.

"All right. Everyone stand in a semi circle around the entrance and put on your masks." Lex skipped forward, pulling his full-face silver mask down. We all had the same plastic mask; silver, covering all facial features, only supplying the eyes, nose, and mouth with grates for breathing. This and all of us wearing black was supposed to help with the magic Falcon was about to enact.

Falcon closed his eyes, mumbled a few words, and a bright blue circle with rune words showed up at his feet, lighting up his whole space. I looked around, worried that it was too bright and it would give away what we were doing.

Falcon's eyes snapped open, showing an elysian, bright, blazing blue, when he lifted his hands toward us and spoke the words. Air magic was in his left hand as water was in his right,

and they twisted together, making a circle in front of us as his voice took on a hollow tone.

It only took a few sentences, and I felt magic surrounding me, settling in around my form. I looked down at my hand, and while I could see a hand-like figure, it was definitely blurred out, not even able to make out my tattoos. It was like there was an air and water barrier around me, moving with my body, concealing me.

“This spell will be active until your mask is removed. As soon as that happens, it will immediately drop away. While this is not foolproof, it should create the atmosphere of the five of us being the same person ... relatively.” I looked up at Falcon, the mask was on, and his voice changed into a robotic deep one that sounded so unlike him it was almost comical. Each mask had a voice changer built in, it went with the whole mask, black pants, and hoodie, keeping the anonymous vibe we were going for. Partnered with Falcon’s magic, it should be difficult for her to pick out which of us was which.

The sound of a bike closing in on us had us all paying attention to the light-haired hellion goddess on her way now. I suddenly felt a jolt of nervousness. *What if she didn't like this? What if going along with Lex's idea was stupid?*

I looked around until I got to Lex, who threw a thumbs up and said in that weird automated voice, “I’m so excited guys!” For some strange reason, this seemed to calm my nerves, and I pulled my gaze forward, waiting for my mate.

She pulled up quick, bringing up dust as she quickly kicked down her stand and swung her leg over her bike, coming up on us like this was just another day. One that she was pissed about. “What the fuck guys? You send me all over the city so you can play out,” she made a show of looking around at each of us, throwing out her hip as she crossed her arms, “a creepy quintuplet fantasy?”

Lex was the first one to burst out laughing. All of us turned toward him, bent over and howling like a hyena. The fuck, man?! He was going to give this all away!

“Quintuplet! That’s brilliant. You’re the funniest woman, but no. This is your gift from all of us.” When she shifted back, giving each of us a what-the-fuck look, I almost went over to wring the demon’s neck.

“A sexual fantasy for our mate. One filled with excitement and feisty adventure. All we need to do now is pick a safe word and say ready, set, go, for this game of prey and predator to start!”

Her eyes widened as her whole face shifted, orbs glittering, and her arms unfurled as she shook with excitement. “Oh! Oh, my god! Seriously! Like, you’re going to chase me and fuck me?! Like, all of you!?”

Lex nodded furiously, practically bouncing on his toes, mimicking her enthusiasm. Before he could say a word, Falcon spoke. “As you can see, we are trying to make this as anonymous as we can. We will all be coming for you. If you would like to set some rules, now would be the time.”

Rayla barked out a laugh. “Rules? Like ... there ain’t no rules?”

“That would be inadvisable.”

She laughed as she pointed to him, “Oh, that is such a Falcon answer, and the one practically skipping in place is definitely Lex.” Falcon sighed, looking up to the sky in frustration.

“I bet you can’t guess the rest of us correctly.” Avery let out, purposely trying to make it not sound like his normal cadence.

She nodded, “True, true,” then her eyes turned into slits, and a slow smile crossed her lips. “But as soon as those pants are off, I will most definitely know who’s who. I know my men’s dicks by heart.”

Avery groned. “I mean ... she is right ... we didn’t think this through.”

“Great Idea!” Lex pulled out his hand to pretend to write on it. “I put it down in my notes for next time.”

“I am *not* magicking your dicks!” Falcon belted as he crossed his arms.

Rayla's brows furrowed as she looked at the rest of us and mouthed, "Notes?"

"Don't ask." I responded through my teeth, not wanting to take anymore time on this nonsense. My wolf was itching to come out, and it was getting hard to keep him reined in.

She shrugged and looked around again, licking her lips as her eyes focused on each of us. It was the eyes of a predator, not prey.

"Now, while I most definitely want to play this game of hunt and be hunted ... I do want to let you all know that I won't be going easy on you all." My smile deepened, and my wolf began to howl in my head. I knew she wouldn't be soft about it, fighting back, but it excited me that she immediately put us all on equal ground. That meant we could get real rough. With how my wolf was showing me how he wanted to bite into her neck and rut her into the ground, face down, I don't think it would be in me to be more lax.

She continued. "And while you might be hunting me, I'll also be hunting you. You're not wolves going against a little rabbit, it's like wolves going against a leopard, and this kitty's got fangs." She tongued one of her fangs, and I swear, my dick tightened.

"Safe word?" Falcon asked.

She rolled her eyes. "While I don't think I'll be using it, I do think that this would be fair for the whole group ... so how about ... " she tapped her chin, "Vegas."

When Cosmo scoffed, she turned toward him. "I could always make it the original one I thought of, but then again, it would immediately kill the mood. Would you like to make it Ternin?"

"No!" All of us yelled, and she smiled like she got the response she thought she would. I swear, if anyone said Ternin, my dick would immediately shrivel, and that was not the point of this game.

"Then Vegas it is!" Her voice turned high as she clapped her hands. "Now, how is this to start?" Her eyes looked around the

forest, immediately searching for her escape route. Smart little kitty.

Cosmo was the first to answer her. “We’re going to give you a head start of ten-”

“Five.” She gave a rebuttal like it was an auction, and she could just change the number as long as none of the rest of us spoke.

I could tell he was glaring at her as his arms crossed, and his face mask dipped forward. “Fine,” he ground out, “five seconds, and then we’ll be coming for you.”

“Wait!” She ran to her bike, popped off the seat, and came running back as she kicked off the heels she was wearing and put on some flats. “This is much better. Can’t let you guys win on a technicality.” She smirked as she widened her stance.

She was wearing a thin lacy crop top with a mid-length skirt that had a slit that went up her leg at a dangerous length. “Do you ... ” Falcon started, gulped, then finished with, “Do you want a change of clothes?”

She grinned. “Naw. This way, if you catch me, I’m prepared.” She slid her hand down her hip and fingered the high slit. I bit the inside of my mouth as a few others groaned. “It’s you guys that will have a hard time in those black hoodies and pants. Good luck.”

Oh, she was going to eat those words, I pulled down my zipper, keeping it so that all I would need to do was flick my fingers at my button, and I would be ready to take my prey just as I saw fit.

“Oh, and one more thing.” She paused. “Once I’m caught, please feel free to join in. This prey wants more mouths than one biting into her.”

Another round of low moans and groans hit my ears, and I couldn’t help as my voice rumbled out, “One.”

Cosmo shifted his feet, ready to run as he followed with, “Two.” She winked, blew a kiss at us before running off at lightning speed.

“Three,” Lex cooed, the shadows around him bent toward him, already almost covering him in darkness.

“Four.” Falcon followed, air magic flicked around, and the anticipation in the clearing rose.

Avery snapped out his wings and called out last, “Five. Ready or not, here we come.”

CHAPTER 5



I SLICED THROUGH THE cool dry desert air, putting as much distance from myself and the boys as I could. I was still a little surprised by the turn of events. Who would've thought they would already supply me with one of my top three fantasies.

Being who I was, I always liked the chase, the hunt for my prey, but occasionally, I wanted to be the prey. I wanted the excitement that came with running and fighting for my life. I wanted to feel my veins fill with the will to live no matter what.

Then for them all to come together and do this for me, it was like a cherry on top.

For sure this was an Ax thing, I mean, we already had a rough romp in the woods. Cosmo, I think, would secretly want it, but only if I begged him would he do it for me. Lex would hands down do whatever I want, but I also think that once he "caught me" he would bring it a little more on the pleasuring me side, which I don't mind in the least. It's Falcon and Avery that I genuinely am surprised agreed to this, as it was normally not their vibe. Avery was a little more on the submissive side with a slice of dominance when it's needed, and complete control

was more Falcon's speed, and doing it out in the wilderness is definitely out of his comfort zone.

It made my heart squeeze even more that they were trying ... for me.

I hooked a left, about to circle around when I heard a rustle, and I stopped, freezing as I wanted to hear if it was one of them or an animal. I didn't want to be caught off guard.

When a small squirrel came out and ran up a tree, I took a breath. It was just a squirrel. At least, that's what I thought until my back was suddenly slammed up against a tree, a hand around my throat as I thrashed against it.

"Now, what do I have here? Looks like the pretty kitty was a little distracted." The weird robot sound distorted the voice, the silver mask was off to the side of my face, making sure I had to crane my neck to look at him.

When I looked down at the hand, it was fuzzy, and I couldn't make it out, couldn't find any defining features like tattoos. The only thing I knew was I had felt this grip on my throat before. I knew the tips of these fingers, the strength of this hand. I had trained with this hand for a very long time.

I grew still, making myself seem vulnerable as the blurred figure in a silver mask leaned closer. He moved his mask and ran it against my cheek as the eerie sound of him inhaling made my breath hitch. The cold plastic caused my pulse to skip as I tensed up, trying to prepare for anything.

With his shielded face completely devoted to looking at me, his other hand ran up the slit of my skirt, up my belly, and to my lace covered nipple, which he gave a pinch. I gasped, rasping out as he clutched at my windpipe. "Yes. Moan for me. Make it so I have to rip this revealing outfit off you and fuck you right here against a tree." He moved in so close our chests almost touched. "That's how you want it right, naughty girl?"

I puffed out a breath as I realized who it was. It was the "revealing outfit" part that made me a hundred percent sure it was Cosmo. Logically, he would be the only one to catch up to

me this quickly, as well as make a silly comment about my clothes instead of ripping them off.

Since he was close, I pushed my hips toward him, rubbing myself against him like I was a wolf in heat. I could see his muscles tighten for a second before he gave me a taste of my own medicine and rubbed his long, hard cock along my thigh, showing me how much he wanted me back. My eyes rolled back into my head as I imagined just where he could put that fine, hard cock.

“Yes,” I barely rasped out, and his fingers stopped digging into my neck. Instead, they began to caress it.

“You drive me insane, you always have, with everything you do.” His words came out choppy and quick, like he was having a hard time keeping himself in check. “Your scent, your aura, your entire being is everything I crave. Everything I need.”

Even without seeing his face, I could completely picture it. His brows furrowed, his mouth slightly open, showing off a little fang. His violet eyes shining in the moonlight, his steadfast gaze. Everything about Cosmo had been about serving me, and for once, I was giving him the chance to take it. For a split second, I wanted to give up, to let him have his way with me, to succumb to him and bask in his reverence.

Then the side of me that never quits came knocking, reminding me that this was just the beginning of my night. That the hunt was long from over. That I needed to get out of this, to fight back. To win.

I knew what I had to do.

I whimpered, making a show of relaxing my body as I lulled my head to the side, showing him my neck, making an offer of myself to him. It would be hard for any vampire to resist. The pull, the urge, to take what was being offered to you on a platter. To have that thick, ruby red liquid flow down your throat, consuming their life essence. It's too irresistible.

He growled out, moving closer to my neck, right where I wanted him, when I felt his hand loosen, and I took my shot. My fang sliced through the air, sliding right through his hoodie

and into his shoulder. He jerked back on instinct, but I dug my nails into his shoulders, quickly taking long, hard draws, and I felt him wobble, and I turned us around, slamming his back into the tree.

His cherry, vanilla, oaky burn of a flavor hit my taste buds, and my eyes rolled back into my head. He always tasted this good, and I just kept wanting more. More of his life force spilled down my throat, coating it in his deliciously sweet and savory flavor. I could drown myself in this stuff, and I would die a happy woman.

I prepared myself for him to claw at me, to try and rip me away from him. I was stunned when his hands wove through my hair, cupping the back of my head and pulling me closer, harder, into him.

His manly moan was music to my ears as he slumped with one arm against the tree. “Fuck. Ray,” was all he said as he let me pull and pull from him. His other hand trembled along my neck, barely able to hold on as I was bringing him to destruction.

Just as I felt him let go of me, deciding to let me take over him, I looped my leg around his and pulled it toward me, effectively causing him to land on his ass right in front of me.

I crouched down, pulling up his mask to show a blissed out Cosmo. His eyes half-hooded and his breathing coming in short, quick pants. I cupped his face, giving him a small peck on the nose as I whispered, “Better luck next time, Cosy.” Then popped up and zipped away, not wanting to get caught gloating. If anyone knew how to take me down fast, it would be Cosmo, and I didn’t want to take that chance.

Now that I had my blood fill, I was ready to take on any other challenges. That was until I ran into a trap set just for me.

My feet were flying, the crisp air around my face feeling great, when I stepped on one clear spot on the ground, and a neon blue circle lit up. My whole body halted, frozen in place like I had stepped into a magical goo barrier, and it wasn’t letting me free, holding me still for its magical master. *Fucking damn it!*

I began to berate myself in my head. *I should've kept a better eye out for things like that.* I should've looked for signs of magic. The unnatural shimmer magic had, the feeling of air moving in an unnatural way, the ground being too clear, almost being the perfect spot for a foot to step on. No, I didn't pay attention to those things, and I got caught in his magical web.

Yanking my limbs around, I tried to get something to move, even just an inch, but nothing worked. I was thoroughly stuck, but I couldn't give up. I couldn't let any of them win this easily. The game just started!

I was about to try jerking my body again when a dark shape came out from the shadows. Falcon ... or at least I thought it was? With their bodies blurred and the mate bond still covered, I couldn't tell right away. It was both infuriating and exciting.

“You're not going to get out.”

I growled, but I knew it was much less powerful with my face frozen. I went into default mode and tried to threaten him, throwing out so many of my best comebacks, but sadly, they came out in a weird mumble.

The masked man lifted his hand, putting it to his ear as his robot voice said, “What was that?”

His mocking tone infuriated me, my veins filling with a determination to make sure that I got out of this. I only needed to wait for the right moment.

He walked up to me, moving his hand over the magical sphere I was caught in, and shrunk it to a thin layer around my body. Okay, this was definitely Falcon.

“It looks like I caught pretty prey in my web. Such an enticing prey.” His hand cupped my chin before slowly trailing down my body, the spell only affecting me as his hand was able to roam without resistance. “If I catch something, it should be *mine*, right?”

His hand easily sliced through the slit of my skirt and cupped my pussy, running his finger along my bare slit, playing with

me. “No underwear.” I could see his shoulders shake as he gave a pleased sigh. “You look so delectable like this, my mate. Helpless to me and my wants of this body. The things I can make this body do with just a little bit of magic.” He gave a very unlike Falcon growl as he stepped closer, cupping my heavy breast with his other hand.

My eyes rolled into the back of my head, the only movement I was allowed. Being caught by him like this, giving up all freedoms and letting myself be taken, used, was surprisingly intoxicating. I wanted more.

He lifted my shirt, my puffs of breath grew more erratic when he pushed his mask up just enough to reveal his mouth, his lips wrapping around my nipple and sucking. Shivers ran up and down my body, shaking with pleasure as my throat burned to let out a long, sensual moan but wasn't able to.

Two of his fingers scissored me open just as he ran a finger back and forth from clit to hole, sinking in his finger, covering it in my essence when he repeated the process as he spread my wetness all over. My body yearned to react, to move, to flinch, to be able to do something as he took what he wanted. I let out a small, soft whimper, and his head rose up, looking at me with those cold, crystal blues I was so fond of.

“Do you see what it's like to be me, my wild one? To watch you every day, work beside you, as you hold this exquisite body only inches from me, and I must resist myself? I must keep back my urges to completely strip you bare and explore you for hours as you writhe underneath me? Do you know how torturous that is? How much control I exert every single day?”

His words only made my body tremble with need. As much as I put my work first, the Syndicate business first, that didn't mean I wasn't feeling the same way. That I wanted to throw everything to the wind and lock my mates up in a room for weeks on end, feeding and fucking until we couldn't stand. Hearing my frosty, logical mage's confession right now made being caught in his magic barrier maddening. I wanted him to let me free so I could show him just how much I felt in return.

His eyes stared into mine, a war going on inside them on display, but I didn't care. I didn't know what he was trying to decide on, but I wanted him to know how much I craved him, too. I put all my desire and hunger for him in my eyes, hoping that he understood without words.

"Fuck it." The hand around my breast lifted to my neck, squeezing me in place as he pushed two fingers inside of me and collided his lips with mine, devouring me just how he wanted.

For a second, all I could feel, all I could think about, was his lips on mine, stealing my breath away as he worked up my body. I didn't even notice that my arms were around him, my body free from the trap, until we each pulled away with a ragged breath.

His forehead rested on mine, his fingers still moving inside of me. "That's right, wild one. I want to see how much you tremble. I want to hear your moans for me. I want this body to break for me willingly. My prey bends to me."

His soft, rugged voice was almost like a lullaby, entrancing me into his world until that last part. As soon as he said the word "prey", I remembered the game. Remembered what I wanted. While he was making it excruciatingly difficult to make this choice, I knew what I wanted. What the end game was. This was my present, and I was going to get all of it.

I huffed my agreement in his ear, letting my hands comb through his hair until my fingers felt my wrist. Finding the watch he got me, I let my body sag, letting him think that I was giving up, giving into him of my own free will. It gave me just the right amount of time to push the button on my watch.

As soon as I pressed it, two long, neon red lights came out, snaked down his arms, and wrapped around his wrist before fusing itself to the ground. His eyes snapped up to mine, fury lining them as he used all his control to say in a deep voice, "What is the meaning of this?"

I backed up, looking away for a second because I really did want what he was offering, but I also wanted so much more. I was a greedy girl like that. I hope he understood.

Straightening my shoulders, I faced him, trailing the pad of my finger down the side of his face, bringing my lips to the crook of his neck as I breathed, “How does it feel to be caught up in my web, *prey*?”

His whole body stiffened, and I laid a sweet and sensual kiss on the column of his neck. “Don’t be like that, my mage. I want all of you.” I ran my hand along his growing length. As much as he hated me getting the upper hand, he secretly liked it. I knew he craved a challenge, something that wasn’t easy, and no one could say that I was easy. “More than all of you,” I ran my fangs along his artery, and I heard him inhale, “but that’s not the game today. The game is hunt or be hunted, and I don’t want it to be over just yet.”

I circled him. “You’re the one that created this.” I flicked my fingers along the red magic line that was holding his left arm down at his side. “I’m sure you can get out of it. So, when you do ... ,” I went up on my tippy toes, licked the shell of his ear as I whispered in a sultry voice, “come find me.”

Falcon tipped his head down, coming face to face with me as we were only an inch apart. “Oh, I will.” There was an edge to his tone, a threat, and I smiled. “And when I do, you better be ready. This is your warning, wild one.”

“Can’t wait,” I said against his lips before I turned and sped off.

CHAPTER 6



WHERE THE FUCK IS she?

I had thought it would be good to get a more aerial view of the land, while the trees were plenty, they were thin, making it easier to catch my fast, fierce girl. At least that's what I thought.

I couldn't see her anywhere.

It was an overly large area we blocked off, not wanting someone to just stumble upon our game. With how Rayla, Lex, and Ax were "punch now, ask later" kind of people, it would just be better for everyone if we had a wide berth from civilization.

I regret that now.

After searching and not finding much, I decided to land and go on foot. Give my wings a break. Keep them ready for when I would really need them.

As soon as my foot touched the ground, a big, burly wolf jumped out, its snapping jaws coming at me. I pointed my finger at it. "Don't fucking snap at me, Ax. That's a fast way for you to get a swat on the nose. We all know how much you love that!"

It probably wasn't the smartest move to chastise him in wolf form, but his wolf needed to know that we were not chew toys. Last time his wolf came out, he peed on Falcon and snapped at me every time I got close to Rayla. I was this close to wanting to push a family vote to see if we should just muzzle the damn thing.

A rumble of a growl came out before he jumped forward, planning to knock me onto the ground, but I darted to the side just in time. The golden red, overly large wolf slammed into a tree. The cracking sound was so loud I was surprised it didn't fall over.

I looked down to see my new custom pair of designer sneakers had scuffs on them. Fucking damn it, Ax! I pointed at my shoes, knowing that even if his wolf was out, I knew Ax was in there and could hear me. "You owe me a new pair, by the way."

The wolf cocked its head, and I swore that it rolled its eyes at me. He thought I wasn't serious, but I was. If he didn't, he was going to find his wolf ass in a kennel the next time he went to sleep.

Something sounded to the left of us, and the wolf darted away, going after whatever he heard and leaving me in the dust.

Standing up, I patted myself down, getting all the dirt off me that the wolf was responsible for. I thought we had agreed for him not to go full wolf? His wolf was quite territorial, so we didn't want to fight him off in the end, but I guess his instincts took over, agreements be damned.

A shiver of my instincts ran up my spine, telling me that there was something coming my way. I snapped my wings out and flew up into the trees, not wanting to deal with any of the other guys right now. Not until the signal.

Wind flew up into the trees, I gazed down to see who it was. If it was Ax again or Lex, I might just stay up here. Those two are on a different level of hunt than the rest of us.

My eyes flew open at my luck to see a delectable head of gorgeous ashy locks and an ass that had swayed in my mind

for days. Smirking, I floated down quietly, bringing out my Avery stealth mode as I settled right behind her. Maybe I could do this hunting thing.

I lifted my arms, ready to circle her and swoop her up into the trees when I was suddenly slammed up against a tree with my lady's forearm shoved underneath my chin, choking me. Well, this was different than how I thought it would go.

"I'm surprised, my fairy. When you needed to catch me for twenty-four hours, you just sat in a booth, waiting for me to show up. Now, you are actively trying to seize me on the sly?"

Her normally floral and sugary scent filled my nostrils, causing my heart to skip a beat as my whole body sighed. God, I loved my mate.

I put my hands up in surrender, taking a hard gulp, and she loosened her grip a smidge to let me talk. "You got me. Plus, this whole hunter thing was not my forte. I'm the type to kill you over drinks before putting that much effort into hunting you down just for fun."

Shrugging my shoulders, confessing to her without remorse, that's just how I felt. I understood vampires and werewolves' instincts to hunt and dominate. I even understood Falcon's need for control, that had become even more evident the longer I knew him, but me, I enjoyed a kill like the rest of them, but I could just sing it out and be done with it. No fuss, no muss. It's why I enjoyed using my imagination when it came to my kills.

Her hand let me go as she nodded, both of us standing there in silence. I could see her eyes pinched in thought before they shined wide with a thrill behind them. "I think I have an idea ... one that still keeps with the theme of the night."

She stepped up into my space, her slow and lazy stance turned calculating, her muscles flexed, as her face fell. Her golden pink eyes narrowed as she got closer. My back hit the tree again, but this time, it was my fault. Walking backward subconsciously from my mate who looked like she was going to eat me up, skin, blood, bones, and all.

Lunging forward, she ran her nose along my neck, her fingernails digging into the other side, the feel of something cutting down into my skin. My heart sped up, trying to bust out of my chest as both hesitation and excitement surged through my veins. It was confusing. Something I was not used to, but that had turned into a regular state when Rayla was around, so I learned to enjoy it.

Moving her face in front of mine, lifting her hand to show me my ruby red liquid coating her finger tips. She still hadn't given me a smile or a smirk, everything dead serious as she pushed one of her fingers past her plump lips and moaned.

Her eyes flicked up to mine, mesmerizing me as she continued licking each finger nail coated in my blood. Her motions went from not wanting to lose a single drop to this was now a finger-licking porn video that was turning me on faster than it would a twelve-year-old boy.

One second, I was standing up, watching her, trying to find my opening to join in, the next second, my shoulder met the ground, pain slicing through that lust as she shoved me onto my back. I looked up at her, ready to yell, when she loomed over me, cutting off the moonlight, making her gorgeous pale face fall with shadows and secrets.

“Run.”

I tilted my head, my brain not computing past my mate shoving me to the ground. She lunged forward, getting in my face as her tone turned deadly. “Run, my little fairy. Run like the big bad vampire is going to catch you and drain you dry. Run.”

For a second, my body seized underneath hers, that stubborn pride of mine, the one that said I was a boss of the fucking Syndicate was rearing its ugly head. My lips tipped up in a snarl until she dove for my lips.

Her kiss was short but intoxicating. The feel of her feather soft lips, her jasmine scent filling my lungs as the taste of her mouth made mine dry. She pulled away too fast when she stood up and said again, “Run. When I catch you, I will show you just how exquisite it is to mix adrenaline and sex.”

Well, now that sounded interesting. My boss side calmed down at the word sex. What she was selling piqued my curiosity, and I made my decision.

I crawled up before shooting out my wings. Her eyes caught on the iridescent colors shifting, knowing that I bought myself a few seconds head start, I shot away from her. I looked back for a second as I saw her beautiful face light up with a brutal smile, one that made her look like a serial killer. It was still dangerously gorgeous but spooky, causing my instincts to drive me forward.

Slicing through the air, I made a quick dart through the thin trees. While this kind of desert forest wasn't good for hiding, it was good for making quick decisions in changing course. I kicked at trees to change my direction, switching flight patterns from high to low, and made sure I lost her. There was no way she caught up to me with all the diversion of patterns I was accomplishing.

This was accelerating. Moving quickly, making fast decisions, or else I would get caught by the monster chasing me. There was a primal freedom to it, making me feel more and more alive as my heart beat double time. My wings burned, but it was a good kind of burn, the one you got from extensive use.

A tiny bead of sweat slid down the side of my face, and I realized how much effort I put into this running business. I slowed my pace, readying myself to turn around to gauge how far away she was, when I felt a chill run down my spine.

I felt a flash of cold wind hit me as she zoomed past me. I slowed even further, my pulse in my neck throbbing as I realized that she was behind me the whole time. Now, she was in front, setting a trap for me.

Backing up, I felt like the best course of action was to go backwards when a cold hand wrapped around my neck as a husky, dark female voice whispered, "Where do you think you're going?" My head jerked just as my body lurched forward, trying to get away on instinct, but I was yanked back, my head bent sideways as her fangs slammed into my neck.

The adrenaline pumping in my veins was warring with the flight instincts that my body was feeling. My wings fluttered against her, hands clawing at hers, which just caused her to grip me harder. All of this was going on while somewhere inside of me remembered that this was my mate, and I really liked it when she sank her fangs into me.

As my body was beginning to lose its fight, her other hand snaked around me, unzipped my pants in one quick motion before my rigid cock sprung forward, and she gripped it. That part of my body was pumping so much blood that it was about to bust. For someone who thought they had seen and done it all, this whole experience opened up a new kind of exhilaration for me.

She ran her hand up and down, squeezing the tip just how I liked when she dislodged herself from me, and I moaned out at the loss. She quickly turned me around and shoved me to my knees. I would've complained, not liking the desert dirt all over my new clothes, when I looked up at her and lost my breath. Her head blocked the moon, but its rays lit up behind her head, almost making her white hair glow around her. Her fangs were dripping red as she made a mess licking at her lips, staining her pale skin with my blood. The smirk on her lips and the triumph in her eyes made her look like a warrior goddess ready to take down her kill.

I was in awe of her.

She ran her hand through my hair softly, playing with the ends. "Do you understand, my fairy, how this game could be played?" She ran her nail up my chin. "How you can have fun even as the prey?" I nodded, not knowing what else to do as she caught me in her spell.

She swung her leg that had the slit in her skirt up and over my shoulder, bringing her center so close I could smell the sweet scent, and my mouth watered. Her fingers gripped onto my hair as she tilted my head back to look directly up to her. "Now, devour me just like I did you."

I ran both my hands up the backs of her thighs. A small hiss of a breath escaped her as I moved my face forward and

whispered, “I will capture your orgasm like it’s my prey.” I yanked her forward, pushing my whole face against her as she tilted her head up to the sky.

Grabbing her ass with both hands, I made sure that while she felt in control with her hand in my hair, I was equally in control with her body in my hands. I ran my nose against her clit, digging my fingers into her ass so hard I knew she felt me from both ends.

I swiped out my tongue, licking at her center like a starved man. I wanted all of her. I wanted to drown in her wetness, and make a mess of her between these silky pale thighs. While she might be the one that conquered the hunt, I would be the one that conquered her body, making her bend to my will with the tip of my tongue.

Her pants came out short and choppy as her fingers twisted in my hair. The pain in my scalp only pushed me further. I flicked my tongue over her clit, switching between slow and long to short and quick. The animal groans coming from her mouth were pushing me to do more, go harder, get more of her to crumble above me.

Her hips bucked against my face, but I kept my firm grip on her ass, keeping her still for me, and it was driving her wild. “Fuck, Avery. I want to just lay you down and fuck your face into the dirt. I want you covered in me.”

I shuddered at her words, envisioning her doing just that, and I reached down, running a hand over my cock, feeling the pre-cum leaking out at the tip. I collected as much as I could before shoving my tongue and a cum-covered finger inside of her.

She screeched out, letting go of my hair as she cried out, moaning so loud I was surprised someone didn’t come over right away to check on us. I felt her pussy clamping down on me as I swirled my tongue and pumped my finger in and out of her, playing with two different sensations at the same time.

“Shit. Oh, goodd, Avery!” She was singing now, just how I liked my canary. She was close to finishing out her last tune, giving me everything that I wanted.

I craved for her to come so loudly that the others would show up, yelling at me. Telling me I ruined everything as my face glistened with her cum and all of their jealous eyes were on me. I wanted her cum to stain my face just like my blood stained hers. Marking us both as each other's in every way.

Just as I was about to claim my prize, she stiffened, and a slow clap came from behind me.

“I’m a dedicated stalker, and I have watched my rose for many sessions, but this one is going to be cataloged in my brain forever. Good job.”

Fucking psycho stalker.

Rayla jumped back like I knew she would, I’m sure feeling like it was two on one, and she didn’t want to give up that easily. Her competitive streak was unparalleled like that.

I almost had it. My shoulders slumped as I ground my teeth together. “Fuck you, Lex.”

Lex appeared next to me, smoke wafting off him as he called out in shock, “Fuck me? Oh, I don’t swing that way, even if you are the pretty one, but damn, oh, man, did I enjoy that little show.” His voice turned soft and hungry. “My rose, you looked so exquisite. I almost walked over to tear you away and fuck you silly just so I could claim your sweet and tempting orgasm” He licked his lips as his hands turned into fists. “But I kept my composure. I made sure the game was going to be good and fruitful.”

He turned to glare at me, and I knew why, but I didn’t care. I almost had it!

Rayla’s gaze bounced between us as before I watched as hers turned from the hazy, pleasure-filled one to a calculating, assessing one. Fucking damn it! My window had closed. Fuck!

I swung my fist out at Lex, who for some reason knew what I was going to do and disappeared in his shadows and smoke before reappearing again just outside of hitting distance. Dick.

We all heard a close howl in the distance, and Lex tutted out, “Oh, he has been searching for you, my rose. You better get going or else he is going to catch you.”

She glared at him for a second before blowing him a kiss, winking at me, and zooming off.

I slumped to the ground, staring at where she was just at with my dick out and weeping at the loss of our mate. We wanted her back, now!

Lex patted me on the back, which I slapped at him and scrambled to get up as I tucked my dick back in. “Yeah, no, Lex. I don’t care how cool you are about it, I’m not talking to you with my dick out and no Rayla.”

He laughed one of his crazy I-don’t-care laughs, and I knew my words went in one ear and out the other. He suddenly stopped and turned to me with a serious face. “What did you get her for a present?”

“I got her a ... wait! No, I’m not telling you! You will just have to be surprised later.”

He giggled like a kid and rolled his eyes. “Fine. Be that way. Some eskimo brother you are.”

Walking in the direction she went, he shook his head, and I felt the need to respond. I should’ve known better.

“Lex, I distinctly remember all of us telling you not to call us that.”

He showed me his profile as he winked at me with a shrug, his usual make-me gesture, and flicked his hand for me to follow him.

“You know I don’t speak idiot.”

I closed my eyes for a second, cursing the universe for the millionth time for making this man my mate brother, and then followed him.

CHAPTER 7



I WAS TORN BETWEEN wanting to yank Lex's head off his body or give him a big hug and kiss. While this ache between my legs was annoying and Avery almost got one out of me, I was glad that he interrupted because Ax sounded close, and if he was in wolf form, he would tackle me, and that would ruin everything.

I rolled it around in my head. Praise, punishment, praise, punishment ... what to do, what to do I'd figure it out when I had time. Right now, I was trying to dodge a wolf.

I didn't know how I knew, but I could feel that he was close. My spidey senses were going off like a motherfucker, and I always listened to those. Just like when they told me Avery might like to be the one being chased.

Man, that was fucking hot. My body still hummed with excitement at hunting down my fairy prince. I wanted more. I wanted him to try and fly high up in the air, give me a challenge where I would need to dominate him while gravity was being used against me. My body trembled as my imagination took wing.

That was my first mistake.

Before I could figure out what was happening, a flash of fangs and teeth came straight for my neck, so I pivoted, and instead,

my arm was caught in the wolf's mouth, dragging me down into the ground.

The burn of teeth slicing skin, rocks digging into my back, and my head slamming into the sparse grass ground would take out any other person but me. I kicked at the wolf, shoving my heel into its rib cage, and it finally let go of my arm, backing up with a growl, just enough for me to get a clear view of this creature.

Fur that was red with honey hues sprinkled all over, a devil may care attitude, and a vicious bite that would be felt way past they were healed ... this was definitely Ax.

The wolf growled at me as it circled around, putting a paw forward as I took a step back, testing me as I was facing it head on with my hands out. I didn't want to punch my wolf, but I would if I had to. *What was a little rough play between lovers?*

Lifting my arm, I showed him that my wounds were already healing. "You're going to have to do a little more damage than that to catch me, wolf."

His eyes turned into swirling golden pools, his tongue swiped out as he licked his razor-sharp teeth, almost grinning before snarling at me. I laughed. Like, a big belly one, on purpose. I wanted to get this wolf to stop planning and start reacting.

I pretended to wipe my eyes, and I knew my plan had worked. He crouched down, and in two seconds, launched himself at me, going straight for my throat. I dodged, looked behind me, and winked at the wolf's large head swinging my way. "You want me? You gotta catch me," then I sped off, bouncing between trees and flying over boulders.

I could hear the pounding of his paws, pounding that matched the thumping of my heart that was racing in acceleration. My blood pumping, running wild inside of me, and I almost let out a giddy laughter. This was what it felt like to be alive.

That familiar rush filled my limbs, causing me to run harder, faster. Making me want to keep this chase going on for hours,

days. The constant high of the rush filling my mind. That was until I felt a set of paws shove me into the ground.

I fell hard. Slamming into the ground, shooting my hands out in time to prevent a face plant. Anywhere else but my face could get banged up. Cuts and bruises on the face were not sexy

Just as I turned around to face him, paws landed on each side of my head as he growled in my face. I pushed out my hand to shove him off when I was met with a solid rock hard set of pecks. I looked up in time to see Ax shift back. The tips of his shaggy red/brown hair skimming across my face, his hot breath inches from me as his eyes were fixated on mine.

“Now, just where do you think you’re going, little siren?” His body fell forward as I tried to wiggle away, to get out of his trap.

I kicked out again, but he knew that trick and looped his leg around mine. Resting his heavy chest against mine, I was effectively trapped. Smirking up at him, I gave him a toothy smile as I bantered back, “Oh, you know. Taking a stroll with a big, bad wolf.”

His hundred-watt smile stunned me for a second as I basked in the glow of that smile just long enough for him to turn me around, shoving my face in the ground as he whispered in my ear, “Oh, yes. You took me for a good, long stroll ... but this big, bad wolf is done with that.” His claws hooked onto the top of my skirt and ripped it off me.

“Now, this big, bad wolf is going to take what’s his.” With one hand roughly at my neck, he rose up, looping his other hand around my torso, bringing my back end up to my knees just before he gave my naked ass a smack. “That’s my plump ass.”

I wiggled, trying to turn around to see him, but his fingers gripped me harder, digging into my neck to keep my head in place. My breathing was harsh and fast, dirt flying from my face as my heart pounded just as fast as the chase, and my lips curled up.

My mind raced, searching for something snappy to say when I heard a button pop and felt a velvety cock rubbing against my pussy lips. My tongue fell to the back of my throat. Biting my lips, I tried my best to not make a noise, to not let him know right away that I liked where this was headed.

“You’re not getting away from me this time.” His voice had an edge to it, a snarling growl to it that was deeper than normal. *Was this his wolf?*

The space around us grew stifling, making it hard to breathe as claws trailed lightly down my back. “I’ve wanted this more than you know, mate.” Two clawed fingers parted my drenched gates, exposing me as he took a loud sniff as his chest rumbled. “That’s what I craved.” That big, hard cock of his rubbed against me, coating himself with my wetness.

I, again, was trying to use my brain to come up with something sassy to say, but my mind was drawing a blank, and I was only running on feelings. Feelings that were swirling inside of me like a typhoon, collecting everything into one big ball in my throat. Anticipation, adrenaline, and desire curled around me. What surprised me was the twinge of fear, fear of the unknown, like you get before jumping off a building. It was electrifying. I could feel every cell in my body coming to life.

Before I knew what was going on, he brought up both my arms behind me, lifting my chest up just as he slammed his cock into me. I screamed out into the night sky, the moon shining down on me like it was the only one who heard me as my knees dug into the ground.

My body shook from the ecstasy of finally being taken after being teased so much. He slammed into me over and over again, using my arms as leverage to pull me back and forth against him. “Wet. Mate. Wet. Mate. Fuck!” His words confirmed that his wolf was the main one in control, and I liked this side of Ax. I could feel the animalistic need to just fuck me, take me, fill me. That was all that was on his mind. He didn’t care about anything else. No ego, no back and fourth, just straight up fucking and filling my hole as fast as he possibly could. I loved it.

His thrusts began to grow frantic, and he dropped my arms, grabbing my hips as his claws dug into my skin, piercing it to keep me in place as he pistoned into me with fervor. That coiled up orgasm that each of them had a hand in building was starting to unravel.

My pussy clenched as I looked down, his claws had drawn rivulets of my blood on my hips, making it look like he was marking me as his. That was it. I was at the end of my rope. I didn't have time to think or say anything as my whole body shook from the explosive orgasm that rocked me.

“Oh, fuck,” was all I got out as I closed my eyes, letting the shockwaves of pleasure take over my body, and I felt fucking amazing. So good, in fact, that *I wanted more*.

“And more you shall have.”

A ferocious growl sounded behind me as I opened my eyes, still bouncing from Ax's pounding, when I saw Lex, Avery, Falcon, and Cosmo in front of me. *Well, shit, did I say that out loud?*

“No. Almost done.” Ax's voice came out gruff and painful as he gripped me harder, but Falcon flicked his hands, and suddenly, Ax was no longer inside of me as a thud and a groan sounded at my rear.

“You know the plan,” my frosty mage said as he glared at Ax. “It was your stupid decision to let your wolf have his fun. Now, you have to pay up.”

Lex sauntered up in front of me, capturing my attention as his knees fell right before mine. He cupped my face, coming so close to my lips that they were almost touching, “Are you ready for us all, my rose?”

My tongue swiped out in response, licking his lips before I spoke. “More than ready.” My arms circled around him as I kissed the ever-loving shit out of him. I was so revved up that I needed more. I may have had one amazing orgasm, but that was only the tip of the iceberg. I needed more. Needed all of them. I wanted to be filled and fucked so good that my body

turned into a puddle on the floor and they had to carry me home.

His mouth met mine with the same urgency, his hands roaming around my whole body. I sunk my hands in his hair, fingering those horns that made him go wild. A rip sounded into the night as my lacy top fell into pieces on the ground, and his warm, soft hands cupped my breasts. I moaned into his mouth, and he swallowed it all.

My body jumped as wet kisses trailed down my back, and my whole body melted into Lex, trusting him to hold me as I basked in the feeling of more of my mates joining in.

A growl sounded to my right, but Falcon's voice reprimanded right after. "You take a seat, for now." I couldn't help the smile that formed on my mouth and the puff of a laugh that came out.

"If she's able to laugh we're not doing a good job," Avery taunted from behind me, and I guessed he was the one who was kissing my back, but not for long. Long, gentle fingers parted my thighs, opening my knees wider as Lex trailed his mouth down my neck, causing me to gasp as he bit me every other kiss.

My attention had been so focused on Lex's traveling lips, reveling in the feeling, that my eyes flew open when a head slid between my legs and a tongue swiped at my pussy. I looked down to the side to find that Cosmo had slid underneath me from behind, causing me to sit on his face as he used that long, wet tongue along my center.

"Oh, my-" I cut off just as Lex's lips found my nipple and sucked it into his mouth. My legs shook as out came a garbled mess of words and sounds.

"This is one of my favorite ways to see you, so enraptured in your pleasure that you can't help but lose your sassy words." I cracked my eyes open to see Falcon just to my left, watching with rapt attention. His eyes brimming with controlled curiosity.

Flicking my eyes down, I saw the large strain in his pants, and I couldn't help it as I licked my lips. I wanted him. I wanted him to feel just as good as I did. Turning my face upward, I let him see how good I felt as I moaned at Cosmo's change from licks to making figure eights & Lex flicking his tongue at my nipple.

Falcon's face morphed, his lips parted as his eyes shined with an insatiable hunger, one that we both knew I could help him with. I made a show of eyeing his dick before trailing my gaze back up to his eyes as I pleaded once. "Please."

His chest rose and fell quickly, his eyelids flickering as his mind was battling with some decision. I let out another low, guttural moan, and Ax made a shift to come after me, to tackle me to the ground and fuck me like how we started.

Falcon's eyes lit up with a brilliant electric blue, lifting his arm as he used his air magic to hold Ax back. "Not yet." The finality in his words caused Ax to snap at him, and Falcon stepped toward me. "You need to learn patience, wolf. Maybe this will help."

He glided toward me like he was walking on air itself. Sometimes, I was captured by him, in awe of his magic and how it made him seem unearthly. A hard bite landed on my nipple as Lex flicked his onyx eyes at me, he pulled out a pearl handled switchblade, opening it with the flick of his fingers before running it along the curve of my breasts, creating a perfectly thin line that slowly dripped my blood. He made a show of licking at it, smearing my blood around my pale, heaving breasts, and my hunger surged.

He then ran the blade along his tongue, blood gushing from his mouth as he smiled at me like a purely blissed out psycho. He yanked the back of my head toward him and kissed me like it was our last of days. His sweet, chocolatey tasting blood spilled down my throat, and a vicious hunger took over as I grabbed his face, squeezing the sides of his head to ensure he couldn't move from my mouth's assault of his.

His male moans and cries at my rough advancement made me want to drag him off and devour him, to cut him all over and

bathe myself in his blood, his essence. To be connected forever on a cellular skin level.

I was yanked from my thoughts as Cosmo sucked hard on my clit, and a lubed up cock positioned itself at my ass. Avery's breathless words hit me, giving me a moment of pause. "We will give you more, fierce girl. We will give you all the more's you want. So much that you won't be able to handle it."

My sassy mouth just couldn't quit as I panted, "Bet?"

He chuckled. "You just can't help yourself, can you?" I opened my mouth to respond when he sheathed himself inside of my ass and my eyes rolled back into my head. Cosmo pushed two fingers inside of me as Lex began to kiss me all over, telling me over and over how amazing and beautiful I was. How they were so lucky to have me for a mate. I was ready to explode again from the love I was feeling from these men.

"Fuuuuuuuck." I knew my moans could be heard from miles away, so I hoped that we were at least that far away from civilization.

I vaguely recall wolfish whining in the background, but my focus was taken as a cool, gentle hand wove its way through my hair, tipping my head to the side. Falcon had his cock out, already beading with that sweet precum that made me want to lick it.

"Go on, wild one. Show me what you got." I licked my lips before he leaned forward, pushing his velvety cock between my lips as I licked all around him, lubing him up with my saliva in that messy, dirty way I liked.

He hissed through his teeth, glaring down at me. I gently balanced his dick between my teeth as I gave him a big smile, knowing that he would be irritated by the mess but enjoyed the efficiency. It was small things like that which kept our red and blue fire for each other alive. The wild to his calm.

He grabbed both sides of my head, warning me. "I'm going to fuck this fanged mouth hard and rough. The choking sounds you will make as my cock rams down your throat will be another exquisite thing to make note off."

Just before he does as promised, Avery picks up speed, pounding my ass, grabbing my hips to keep me still. “Fuck, fierce girl, your ass grips down so good.” Then I felt Cosmo moan against me, and a shiver ran up my spine. Cosmo entered a third finger and began to curl them against the thin wall that separated him from Avery’s cock, and Avery began to curse out loud. “Fuck. Holy fuck, man. Shit.”

I knew he was close, and I flicked my eyes to the side, seeing Lex who was now pumping his hand furiously on his dick. His hooded eyes jumping around, watching what each mate was doing with a yearning and craving that seemed like it could bust out of him at any moment. Lex’s breathing turned husky, and he called out, “Suck him down good, my rose. Once they’re done, you will have three mates who are going to claim you hard and fast.”

No sooner did he finish the last word, Falcon shoved his cock into my mouth, fully seating himself. I choked, just like he said, my eyes watering as he kept my head in place with his hands, and he whispered angrily, “Fucking shit. You will be the death of me.”

He let go of my head as I gasped for air. A bead of spit strung us together, and for some reason, that turned me on even more. I wanted to make a mess, to watch him fall to ruin by just using my mouth. Wanted that thick cock to fill me up as my ass was being pounded into and my pussy was being played like a fiddle. I wanted it all. I was a greedy girl like that.

Snagging his pants with my hands, I pulled him forward. He gasped out as I swallowed him down, like before, but now, I was bobbing my head up and down, hitting the back of my throat like it was a pinball machine.

Avery cried out as his thrusts grew frantic, and he slammed into me one last time before his hot seed shot up into me. I felt him kiss my back, murmuring how divine I looked as he pulled his cock out and replaced it with his fingers. “I won’t leave this body until you come, fierce girl.”

I moaned out at his words, the vibrations from my mouth lining Falcon’s cock and the garbled noises he made broke me.

My orgasm smashed through me, causing my whole body to clench up as I was stunned by the frenzy of pleasure that raced up and down my body.

“Ahhhh,” Lex sighed right before I felt a warm, sticky mess shoot across my chest.

Falcon grabbed my head again and surged into it, taking advantage of my stilled body. He hammered into my mouth, making my lips feel bruised as he gazed down at me with my glossy rapture-filled eyes and messy, swollen lips wrapped around him. He barely got the words out between his clenched teeth. “So ... fucking ... beautiful.”

That was all it took for him to tip his head and growl up into the sky as he shot ropes of cum down my throat. I gulped every bit of it down, circling my tongue around the head of his cock to make sure I got every drop. He pulled out, looking completely drained as he backed up a few steps and sat down, staring at me with wide eyes and rosy cheeks.

I winked at him, and he swayed toward me like he was going to fall over. Man, that boy had it bad.

Still having some energy left in me, I looked down at Cosmo, who’s eyes never left me. I shimmied down his chest, smearing my cum all over his shirt as my hands reached behind me, pushing my cum-covered chest out as I unzipped his pants.

He took a finger, never taking his eyes off me, as he swiped it up though Lex’s come and circled my nipple. It was slow and erotic in the most sensual of ways. It spoke volumes as to how he didn’t care that I was covered with Lex’s cum, he didn’t care that Avery’s cum was leaking out of my ass and was covering his shirt along with mine. He just wanted me. He wanted me to be happy and whole. That was all that mattered to him.

His cock bounced out, and without taking my eyes off him, I lifted myself and lowered down onto his cock. His eyes rolled back as he bit his bottom lip, desperately trying to keep his pleasure-filled noises to himself. Desperate for more.

I began to pump myself on him, bending back so he could watch himself disappear inside of me, over and over again. It was a leisurely kind of seduction that was causing his body to quake underneath mine.

Being so focused on Cosmo, I didn't notice that Lex moved behind me until an arm wrapped around my torso, his face burrowed into the crook of my neck. "Your vampire mate wants more, my rose. I think we should give it to him."

Nodding, I let Lex straighten me up as he brought up his switchblade, resting the cool edge along my neck. "I think he wants to see red, my rose ... is that what you want?" Cosmo's eyes widened, his eyes flicking to the knife, and then to my mouth, almost pleading with me.

Oh, how the times had changed. If this was when we first got together, he would've ripped Lex a new one while holding a knife to my neck, but now, I only saw desire in his eyes, which meant he trusted Lex wouldn't really hurt me. Maybe hell did freeze over.

"Yes, my demon." I cupped the side of his face as I pressed harder into the blade, smirking down at Cosmo. "I'm always ready to make this a red party ... " I turned my neck, slicing into my skin slightly as I looked into his lust-soaked eyes, "But I don't think he is the only one."

I pushed into the blade deeper, blood running in rivets down my body, the bloody trails following the curves of my body. Lex snatched the knife away, flicking it closed before putting it in his pocket. His eyes narrowed as he gripped my chin hard. "No too much, my rose. I like you to be my bloody feast any day, but I will not allow you to cut your own throat."

His eyes trailed my neck, pinching in concern as he saw how deep the cut went. I guess he was serious about that.

"Then kiss it better." His lips tipped up, erasing his frown as he obeyed me.

He made a show of sucking at the cut on my throat, pulling at my veins. and my body clenched down on Cosmo.

“My turn,” was all I heard before I felt the prick of fangs on the other side of my throat and a long throaty moan as he sucked down a mouthful of my blood.

Feeding both of them caused my body to grow cold, well, colder, so I kept my top part still as I moved my hips against Cosmo. “Fuck, Ray. You have always tasted so sweet, so addicting. I don’t think you could get rid of any of us even if you tried.”

A shaky laugh spilled from my mouth as Lex took another big draw at my neck before running his hot, hard length between my ass cheeks. Cosmo was now making a kiss-bite trail down my body, making my muscles twitch.

“More. I want more.”

Lex chuckled against my collarbone, grabbing two handfuls of my ass as he spread them, placing his cock at the entrance of my puckered hole. “You’re so damn greedy.” Then he slipped inside, my ass still coated in Avery’s cum, making it easier for Lex. His lips brushed up against the back of my ear as he huffed, “I fucking love it.”

As Lex entered me, Cosmo put his hands on the ground and pumped up into me. For a second, they both slowed their pace, matching each other so that I would be filled by both of them at the same time. I gulped, shaking like a leaf in winter as I let myself relax, taking in all of the feelings as I rested my head on Cosmo’s shoulder, trying to regulate my breathing.

They picked up the pace, pumping faster and faster, which, for some reason, sparked my body to react. I placed my hands on Cosmo’s shoulder as I bent back far enough for Lex to kiss me. I will never forget that boyish smile he gave me, like I just did the one thing in the world that would make him the happiest, and he inhaled my moan, holding my throat with one hand as he fucked my ass and held my hip with the other. I moved one hand to grip on his horn that had grown with his excitement, and he shuddered against me, letting me drink down his elated moans.

Cosmo’s thrusts became erratic, pumping into me as fast and hard as he could. I broke from Lex, giving him room to keep

up with Cosmo's speed. Lex circled his hand around and rubbed my clit, igniting a burning flame inside of me, making that small spark turn into a raging inferno as we became a unit of limbs and bodies fucking. It started out gentlemanly and loving, but now, this had turned into a dirty fuck that was taking me on a wild ride.

It wasn't long before that fire snake unfurled, and when Cosmo lifted my wrist and slammed his fangs into me, sucking so hard it felt like my soul was being taken, I fell apart. I cried out, telling them how amazing I felt, how their fat cocks filled me in such a delicious way, how I wanted their cum to fill every crevice inside of me.

They both grunted out at the same time, filling me up like I told them to before we all collapsed onto the desert floor.

I was spent. My body felt the effects of being so satisfied and full ... that was until a clawed hand snaked around my ankle and yanked me across the ground toward him. It was not nice or gentle, rocks slicing up my back, but I didn't feel a thing as I was so engulfed with the pleasure they had pumped into me.

"It's my turn now."

Ax's voice sounded more like him, more human, and I sighed. "My body is like Jell-o, but I don't ever want it to be said that I can't please all five of my mates."

My head lolled to the side to look at him, seeing his eyes shining that golden brown, but they didn't have a feralness to them anymore.

"You think a little cum and blood will deter me from taking what's mine?" His cocksure attitude made me smile. My Ax. My wolf. He would never give me a moment's peace. Thank god.

He scooped me up, murmuring against my body, "Those fuckers thought they could take you from me. Ha. I will fucking show them. I will get your last orgasm all on my own, without the help of anyone." He said that last part loud enough for us to hear a few grumbles of protest in return.

Slamming my body against the tree, he held my ass up as he impaled me with his cock. He stayed seated for a second, breathing in and out before his eyes rose to mine. "I'm going to fuck you silly, but I promise, you'll enjoy it."

I gave a slack smile. "I know you will, mate."

That was all it took for him to howl to the moon and then slam into me over and over again. My legs bounced around his hips, feeling that Jell-o effect I had talked about earlier, but my arms and hands still explored.

Running my nails down his chest so hard I caused a bloody trail to follow, I lapped at his chest before I ran both hands up and into his luscious auburn hair. As soon as I got a full handful, I yanked his head back and slammed my teeth into him.

My back slammed into the tree once more, pressing me into it, making me think that he was trying to shake me off, but his gruff, breathless voice whispered, "Harder."

I dug in deeper, jerking a bit to cause some tearing as I took what I wanted, what I needed from him. Stealing his life blood to replenish what I had currently lost. His manly cries of bliss were all worth it as I savagely tore into him.

He bit into my shoulder in retaliation, but all that did was turn this assault up a notch. The tinglings of an orgasm had started to build, being squeezed out of me. I let go of his neck and captured his lips, going stroke for stroke with him as we ate each other up like it was the last ice cream tub on the shelves.

I could feel when his wolf took back over. His hands on my thighs turned into claws, marking me up as he pulled my legs apart as far as he could, and he rutted into me like an animal. Worse, like an animal possessed by a sex curse.

His head bent as he watched himself sink into me over and over again. His garbled words came out choppy. "Rut ... rut ... rut into ... rut mate ... fuck!"

My body trembled, the last bit I had to give was torn from me when his claw flicked at my clit, and I sobbed out, cursing him as I gushed all over his cock. He came at the same time, trying

to fill me up but ended up spilling out between my thighs, making a whole mess of me as we both slumped to the floor, gulping down breaths as fast as we could.

I slumped against Ax, not having the want to move from my spot but also desperately wanting a hot bath.

The cold magic around my mate bond disappeared, and I could feel all five of them again. The only emotions that came through were happy, calm, love. Smiling at how amazing I felt, I spoke up first. “I don’t tell you guys this enough, but I fucking love you all.”

Lex was the first to pipe up, “We know, my rose. We’ve always known.” They all nodded or grunted in response, all smiling at me like I was the center of their universe.

There was a gush of wind that blew through, and I shivered. Ax’s nose caressed my cheek as he said, “Let’s get her back. She’s cold, and we still have presents.” Lifting me up and cradling me against his large, warm body was like having my own personal blanket. I liked it. Very boss queen style.

Then I processed his words and immediately perked right up. “Wait?! I still have presents?!”

CHAPTER 8



“LIFT YOUR ARM, MY rose.”

I shook my head against his chest, my back to Lex’s front as the warm water soaked into my skin. “Nope. I don’t think I can.” I made a motion with my shoulder, pretending to move it before I settled back into him. “See. It doesn’t work.”

Light laughter rang in the air beside me as long, lean fingers grabbed my arm and lifted it for Lex to run some soap down. I lolled my head over to the side to see Avery crouching next to the tub, smiling at me. “You know that dirty girls don’t get Christmas presents, right?”

Glaring at him, I barked back, “I thought that was naughty girls?”

Cosmo walked up to the other side of the tub, towel in hand as he sassed out, “And you think what you just did wasn’t naughty?”

My lips curved up into a sweet smile as I let my voice rise an octave, “I don’t know what you’re talking about, mate.” I let my face transform into the boss bitch I was, lowering my tone as I threatened out, “Nothing happened that Santa needs to hear about ... and remember, snitches get stitches.”

“Why the fuck is she talking about Santa for?” Ax said as he leaned against the bathroom door, eying me like I was just a tasty snack he wanted to take a bite out of.

Cosmo unfolded the towel and held it up for me. I huffed out, making a lazy motion of getting up, when Lex’s arms circled around me, squeezing onto me. I tipped up my head, taking one hand and bringing his mouth to mine for a short, soft, and loving kiss.

I broke away first as his arms loosened, and he kissed my neck as he whispered, “If you think that was going to satisfy me, I should let you know up front, I will never be satisfied. I will always want more of you at all times for the rest of our existence.”

Patting his hand, I couldn’t help looking into those onyx eyes that promised me more than the world. “Ditto.”

Cosmo stood still, always the one who did and thought of everything I needed. I stood, letting him pat me dry and wrapping me up into the towel. He motioned to move, but I yanked on his shirt, bringing him down to my lips as I gave him a quick yet forceful kiss, one that reminded him that I saw him, wanted him, too.

His hand lifted to my cheek, cupping it even as my kiss was not the soft and sweet kind. “I’m still not used to this ... ” his violet orbs searched mine like they were his salvation before he finished with, “I’m not used to being able to have you whenever I want.” I was about to give him a good scolding about also being my mate when his hand cupped my ass, giving it a good grab as he whispered in my ear, “But I will. I promise.”

I giggled like a straight up school girl. I couldn’t help it. It was like finally getting to be with my all time crush, which brought me back to those beginning feelings of love and infatuation.

Before I could think another thought, I twirled around, hands roaming my body. Avery gave me a cocky grin before he dipped me and kissed me like we were in a romance movie. Just the right swipe of tongue, firmness of lips, and mixture of our breath. My mind took on a hazy feeling when he propped

me up right and pulled away, turning me toward the door as he called out behind me with cheer, “Now, let’s go down stairs. Falcon said he would get all the lights ready, and I can’t wait to see what that arctic mage can do to make a room full of cheer.”

That woke me from my daze, and I hurried out the door past Ax, who squeaked out a noise of shock with his arms open in a what-the-hell motion. I zoomed over to my dresser, snagging my holiday Pj’s. For someone who enjoyed savagely tearing people apart, I really liked christmas and always had a new set of christmas Pj’s. This year, it was a black, cashmere, off-the-shoulder sweater and shorts set with an embroidered set of golden bells with green and red lettering saying, “I’ll deck your halls.”

Slipping them on easily, I went to the secret compartment in my closet, the one I had put in when we redecorated this floor for all of us, and pulled out five presents. Ax barged in, looking at my presents and the open secret compartment, and his mouth fell open. Glaring at him, I whispered in a low, threatening tone, “Little boys with wandering eyes and good memories don’t get presents from Santa.” Then I sped past him again and hurried down the stairs.

You could hear him stomping his way after me as he belted from the second story railing, “Why the fuck does she keep talking about Santa?” I placed the presents under the tree like I didn’t hear him when he opened his mouth again, “Come on. Don’t tell me you-” At his half-finished sentence, I looked up to see Cosmo covering his mouth.

Ax yanked his head back and turned toward him, looking for a fight. In a blink of a second, Cosmo was already halfway down the stairs carrying his own set of presents. “It’s a Desmond family tradition.”

His halfway explanation had everyone turn toward me with raised eyebrows. My lips quivered as I plopped down on the couch, legs spread out to my side as I pulled a cozy blanket over them. “Look, we grew up young in this environment. In an effort to save some “magic” and holiday cheer, my dad told me and Cosmo-”

“He blackmailed us.” Cosmo interrupted as he placed his presents down. The presents under the tree were spilling out farther than the branches because I told them I would refuse to get any gifts unless we all got a gift for each other. It would be weird for me to open a gift from each of them when they only got one from me. I was very adamant about being fair when it came to my mates and I.

A streak of iridescent lines flashed before my eyes as Avery appeared next to me, grabbed my legs, and put them on his lap, effectively snagging the only seat next to me. His smile was pointed to all the others, effectively gloating without saying a word.

I held up my finger to Cosmo, “I think it’s better categorized as a bribe ... but he said that if we didn’t believe in Santa, if we didn’t fear his awe and amazing status during the holidays, we would not be receiving gifts from him.”

When they all looked at me like they still didn’t get it, Falcon walked over to me as he handed me a mug of bloody hot chocolate. Grabbing it, I smiled up at him, pushed my body up, closed my eyes, and pursed my lips. I was waiting for so long that I thought he was going to leave me hanging, but smooth, soft fingers curled around my neck, his thumb running down my throat before his lips landed on mine. The kiss was completely under his control, except for my tongue that skimmed the seam of his lips. He let me in as he squeezed on my throat, and I melted.

When we broke apart, Falcon stood and took the loveseat next to Avery like nothing happened. I wanted to prod him, make him uncomfortable, but it was Christmas, so I let him off the hook. Settling down, I scoffed at the room, picking up where I left off. “What?! Santa’s gifts were always the best ones, right, Cosy?”

Cosmo looked around before taking the seat across from me, folding his arms in a silent pout and it was adorable. “Yeah. For a while, it was for those amazing gifts, and then it just kinda ... stuck.”

I nodded. “Then we started to use his name to threaten each other during this time of year.” I glanced back at Cosmo, lips wiggling as I remembered all of our antics. “Like - If you don’t go get me some ice cream right now, Santa is going to let me burn your gift in the driveway.” I took a sip of my cocoa to hide my smirk.

Cosmo wasn’t fooled. “Or - Don’t drive crazy, if you do, Santa is going to slash your tires and convince everyone not to let you buy new ones.”

I almost spit out my drink because that one did for sure work on me that year he gave me my new bike for my birthday. “Or how about, if you don’t finish your plate, Santa is going to come down the chimney and take all your candy.” I shuddered at the memory of the evil look my dad gave me as he said it. “That one still haunts me.”

“Sounds like you guys.” Avery chuckled. “Always making someone out to be a menace. Now, this time, it’s poor old Santa.” He tutted at me and Cosmo as his hands curled around my foot, fingers digging before rolling them around. *Oh, yeah, that felt so good.*

Ax settled in next to Cosmo across from me, plopping down with his eyes searing at Avery. Avery was grinning as he hit one spot, and I let out a soft gasp. All eyes turned toward me, heat building in their gaze. *I was rested and everything, we could go for another-* No! I snagged my feet back, glaring at Avery before I said out loud, “Christmas first!

Lex finally came down and looked around for a spot. There was one on the other side of Cosmo, but Lex was never one for taking what was given to you. He waltzed his way over to me and sat on the floor in front of me. His silky, luscious hair was right in front of me, and I couldn’t help but run my fingers through it. His head fell back, giving me more access as he sighed out, “Perfect spot.”

I could see all of the guys glaring at Lex, so I grabbed my cocoa and took another sip before leaning over and calling out to Falcon. “So, Mister light technician ... let’s see these Christmas lights!”

He barely moved an inch as he reached into his back pocket, pulling out a small remote as he took a sip and pressed a button toward the tree. I swung my face around just in time to see the star of the tree light up brightly. The light pulsed for a second before a shot of light came out of it and circled the tree, swirling round and round until it hit the last branch and disappeared, just to reappear again at the top. It was a beautiful sight, a perfect blend of technology and magic as it highlighted the decorations beneath while lighting up the room.

My voice came out in awe and appreciation. “It’s beautiful, Falcon. Thank you.” I looked back at him, the ends of his lips quirked up as he gave me a wink. That was like a declaration of love for him. I smiled brightly before I mouthed what I was going to do to him later, and a slight blush rose on his cheeks.

“So, how did we want to do this?” Avery clapped his hands like a man on a mission.

“Why don’t we have Ray open all her gifts first?” Cosmo supplied as the others nodded, but I shook my head, rejecting that idea.

“I want to see all of you open gifts, too ... so, we either go efficiently and separate them all out and open them at once, or we go present by present in a circle.”

That started a whole debate as to how we would do it, but in the end, we agreed to separate them out and have one person open a gift, then that person had to pick another person to open a gift. It seemed the most fair.

Of course, they made me go first, and I made a show of being frustrated, but really, I was super excited. I loved gifts, and this was the first time I was going to get some from my mates.

I snagged a green, medium-size, plainly wrapped present with a small red bow on the top. I made a show of weighing it with my hand. “This one has some weight to it.” I fingered the tag and turned it over to see it said it was from Falcon. Leaning over, I smiled at him while he watched me intently.

I was not one to be the slow and gentle type of gift opener, and I tore into it to find a white box. I lifted the top, and inside was

an exact replica of the magic gun I had been lusting after since I met him. “Oh, my god, yes! Yes, I got one!”

Snagging the gun, I jumped out of my seat and launched myself at Falcon. Luckily, he had placed his drink down because he fell back into the love seat with a groan from my hug assault. “I fucking love it. I knew I didn’t need to be on a stupid list, you sly man!”

I clutched at his body as I dove in and kissed the ever-loving shit out of him. As I pulled away, he gave me one of his rare, full face, dopey smiles, and I preened on the inside.

Cosmo’s stern voice called out, “All right. Next person, Ray. You’re holding up the line.”

“Oh, fine!” I climbed off Falcon quickly as he narrowed his eyes at Cosmo for interrupting us, but he was right. We had a lot of presents to get though.

Once I sat back in my seat, I looked around, “I pick ... Ax.”

He didn’t even look as he plucked a blue sack from his feet, not looking at the tag as he ripped into the gift. He looked baffled as he pulled up a set of socks with two fingers and looked around the room, silently asking who could’ve possibly given him these. I rolled my lips in my mouth, trying not to laugh at his puzzled expression.

“So, I saw that your dresser was barren in the socks department, so ... ” Avery started, shrugging his shoulders, “I had them custom made so they can expand with you when you change.” When Ax’s expression did not change, Avery huffed out, pointing to the socks, “Did you even look at the tops? Each set has either a wolf or fighter theme.”

Ax made a show of looking at the tops. One set was claw marks, one was a wolf howling at the moon, one had a step and repeat pattern of fists and so on. It was actually kinda nice. Ax kept looking at the tops as he mumbled out, “Thank you, Avery.”

“Merry Christmas, Ax.” Avery gave a small, pinched smile before he saved them both by saying, “Now, pick the next person.”

Ax made a show of looking around but as soon as he got to me, I knew what they had all secretly planned. That wolfish grin confirmed it. “Ray, baby, it’s your turn.”

So, this was how they were going to cheat. I had a feeling they came to the present opening order too quickly. Doing the math, they would all open one present by the time I opened all of mine if they each kept choosing me. Those sneaky little fucks.

I picked up a very pretty, white, silver, and light blue box wrapped with a large snowflake bow, and I knew before looking at the tag it was from Avery. I could feel him vibrate with excitement as I carefully unwrapped the present and opened the garment box. In contrast to the outside of the winter wonderland box, I pulled out a ruby red nighty and thong set. The edges of the nighty had white fuzzy lining that made it look like something an ultra sexy Mrs. Claus would wear.

“I was thinking ... there’s a Mrs. Claus class for naughty boys and maybe, just maybe, if we pass the class, we can show her how good we could be.” His smooth, lazy tone skittered down my back as I pictured slapping a wooden ruler in my hands, telling them all to turn around and drop their pants. He chuckled, “See, I knew she would be into it.”

My hand sped up to grab his chin and slowly tilt his face down to mine. My lips just a hair away from his as I said in a sultry voice, running the white fuzzy along his neck, “Mrs. Claus can definitely reform some naughty boys. In fact, that’s her specialty.”

An insatiable appetite filled his eyes, ready to take this to the next level, when I gave him a peck. “Thank you for my gift, my fairy prince.” I looked around and pointed to Cosmo. “Your turn.”

Avery sat back in a huff as I kept smiling at Cosmo. I knew if I looked at Avery, I would fall into the sexy trap of his eyes and ruin everything.

Cosmo plucked a small red box from his lap, looked at the tag, and thanked Falcon before he opened it. His eyes widened as

he showed everyone a very tiny lens, and Falcon spoke.

“It’s one of the world’s smallest camera and mic set. Inside is a piece of paper with an incantation. As soon as you say the words, your watch will pop up with a screen, and you will be able to see and hear wherever you placed the camera. I thought it would be helpful in your line of work.”

Cosmo’s mouth fell open once he processed what Falcon said. He quickly recovered when he asked, “And the range?”

Falcon scoffed, giving him a look that said, *really?* “It’s made from magic. The range is not an issue. Just make sure not to forget or lose the incantation as that is the only way to access it.”

“That is super cool.” I looked at Cosmo, who nodded, still a little shocked at the nice and thoughtful gift.

Lex piped up, “I can’t *wait* to open my gift from Falcon. I want something super deadly but stealthy.”

“Thank you, Falcon. This will be very useful. I won’t waste it.” Cosmo’s tone was impressed as Falcon nodded, taking another sip of his drink like it was nothing, but I could tell he was pleased. I knew how to read my stoic mage.

Cosmo looked at me, shrugged, and said, “Ray. Your turn.”

I huffed as I snagged a gift that was haphazardly wrapped with a lot of tape around it. I wasn’t careful when I shredded the paper and pulled out a set of rose gold throwing knives with the name Desmond on the handle.

“The handles were custom, and I got the blades made from that knife guy you told me about.” I looked up at Ax, his hand behind his neck, rubbing up and down as he kept his eyes on the gift and not on me. I don’t get the pleasure of seeing him look anxious or nervous often, so when I did, I appreciated it.

I got up, bringing the knives with me, and stabbed the knives on either side of his head, boxing him in as I positioned myself on top of him. “I love them. I can’t wait to darken them with my first victim.”

His eyes searched mine until he found what he wanted and smiled. "I'm glad you like them, Siren." I leaned down and kissed him, holding the knives like an anchor to pull me away from the depths of his kiss. I gave him a peck on the nose before going back to my seat and glared out.

"All right, Falcon, your turn."

He took his time, looking at all the gifts before choosing one that was wrapped in black wrapping, no bow, no frills. Just as his finger lifted the corner, Lex piped up, "That ones from me." Lex smiled brightly, nodding his encouragement to open it as the others slowly looked at Falcon's gift like it was a bomb.

Falcon eyed the present for a second before continuing to unwrap it. He opened the box, and I knew it was something he didn't expect as his eyes flew wide open, something that Falcon never did. He pulled out a small glowing orb that swirled with purple and gold smoke. It was hypnotic the way the gold swirled and mixed with the purple.

"Do you know what this is?" Falcon asked in awe.

"Naw." Lex shrugged. "I was on a job, and this was in the house of the mage I killed ... plus, I liked the way the smoke swirled. I thought it would be a nice paperweight on your desk."

"A paperweight ... " Falcon scoffed, looking at Lex like he didn't know whether to thank him or strangle him.

"No. It's far more valuable than that. The mage you killed must've been a spirit mage, one that had been slowly, over several years, siphoned their power into it." He looked back down at it, holding it like it was precious. "It feels like he was one charge away from his goal."

I was now curious about it, so I asked, "And what was the goal?"

Falcon gazed up at us. "He was making a future orb." When all of us didn't react, he exhaled before continuing. "He took not only years off his life, but years of his magic to make this orb, one that most mages don't even attempt to make because

of the effort. This item will give the user a fairly accurate look into the future. While most spirit mages can only see seconds into the future, this will show you hours.”

All of us turned toward Lex slowly, his eyes bouncing around to all of us as he screeched, “What? I thought it looked nice. I didn’t know it was super valuable.”

I puffed out a laugh. “So, is everyone’s gift something you stole from a hit?”

He bent his head back, landing on my lap as he cooed, “Not yours, my rose. Yours was specially made.”

Falcon’s gaze didn’t leave the orb when he softly thanked Lex and told me it was my turn again without looking up. I snickered behind my hand, finding it so cute that this habitually unimpressed mage of mine was so transfixed by Lex’s stolen gift. It made my heart warm.

Lex tapped my leg as he loudly whispered, “Make sure to do mine for last, I’m obviously the best gift giver. You should always save the best for last.”

I looked down and only saw one black and red striped present, and I knew that was Cosmo’s because I recognized the wrapping paper.

Lex giggled, “Oh. my rose.” He got up, smoke covering him as he disappeared and then reappeared seconds later with a large black chest, setting it down at my feet. “I didn’t want to show up the others, so I kept it by my bed.”

I gulped, looking down at the chest and envisioning a dead body ... I just wonder who he would give me? That New York captain that gave me some flack last time? Maybe that dick that cut me off the other night when we were doing the runs?

“I bet someone a hundred bucks there’s a dead body or limb in there,” Ax whispered to Cosmo, who shook his head.

“Two hundred,” Avery called out. Lex kept a devious smile on his face but said nothing.

I reached down and picked up Cosmo’s gift. “Well, that just means that I have to save that one for last now that we have

money on the line.”

Cosmo and I always gave each other things like cars, or bikes, or something extravagant but useful, so I was vastly interested in what could possibly be in this tiny box. Maybe keys to that Yamaha YZF-R1M superbike I’ve been eyeing?

I opened the lid, looked down, and gasped in surprise. I lifted my finger and ran it over a thin, white gold chain, following it down to a gorgeous five carat sized ruby in the shape of a blood drop. It was stunning. I couldn’t take my eyes off it.

“I was never able to get you gifts that ... that I wanted to give you.” I looked up at him, his eyes on his hands, which were clenched together. “I’ve wanted to give you something like that for a long time, something that a mate would get their other half.”

My heart was beating so hard I heard it in my ears, thumping away at this heartfelt gift that I loved. That I didn’t know I always wanted to get from him. It was a gift you gave a lover, not your sister.

I rose up on shaky legs, made my way over to him as I turned around and sat in his lap, turning my head to the side as I lifted the necklace. “Will you put it on me?” I didn’t mean for my voice to sound soft and breathless, but I was having a hard time thinking of anything else but getting this token of our love on me, now.

He slowly took the necklace out of my fingers, circling my neck before laying a long, sweet kiss along my skin. Claspng it together, he said in a husky voice, “You outshine even the biggest jewels.”

I zoomed around in his arms, facing him as I ran both hands behind his head and pushed him up against the couch as I kissed him with years of pent up energy. It started off with just our lips, but quickly, our hands began to roam, and I was practically wrapping my legs around him as I was eating him up as fast as I could. I wanted to show him with my body what he was doing to my soul, how happy I was that we were at the stage we were.

Feeling hungry eyes behind me, I unraveled my limbs as I dragged myself off him. “Your turn, Cosy.” I sped over to my seat before I started an orgy in the living room.

He shook his head, getting that dazed look off his face as he reached down and plucked my gift from the pile. He tore into it, giving me a puzzled look when he saw a garment box, and I nodded at him to keep going. I was holding a giggle in, excited to see what he thought of his present.

He ripped open the box and pulled out a black sweater, looking at it as he puffed out a laugh and turned it around to show everyone. There was a cartoon chimney with words that said, This Santa Loves Going Down.

“Now, that is a good Christmas sweater.” I smiled mischievously as he shook his head. I thought he was going to toss it to the side when he shucked it over his head and wore it with pride.

“At least it’s accurate.” He winked at me, and my cheeks heated. *Where was this little smooth devil hiding?*

I looked away, fanning myself as I found Lex. “I think you need to go next.” Before any of them argued about the rules, I said, “You guys bent the rules, just let me see you all open one gift before I finish, please?”

My mates looked around at each other and shrugged, nodding to Lex to open a gift. He snatched mine out of the pile. “I’m totally curious now to see if we got the same one or different ones.” I just smiled, drinking my cocoa to keep my mouth shut.

He pulled out a black sweater that looked the same as Cosmo’s from the back, and then fell over laughing. “Oh, my rose, you know me too well.” His laughter was contagious as I giggled, and the others barked at him to show them. Turning it around, you saw a big santa that was shaking a finger at you, the viewer, as it said, I’m always watching you, naughty girl.

Everyone either smirked or puffed out a laugh as I explained, “They’re festive and accurate.” Lex put his on immediately, listing all the reasons why his was better than Cosmo’s. I

shook my head. I don't think they will ever not be competitive with me. It was something I would simply have to get over.

Lex turned sharply, crawling up to his knees as he gave me his puppy dog eyes. "It's now time for my gift, my rose. I hope you enjoy it. It took me *a lot* of effort."

Everyone straightened up as he slid this black, pirate style-looking chest over to me. Curious, I leaned over and sniffed, not catching a whiff of blood, and was surprised. After Lex took back on the roles of the Devil family, blood seemed to be his new cologne ... but I never minded. He always smelled yummy to me.

"I'm sure I will love it."

CHAPTER 9



FALCON

I WAS MORE THAN mildly curious to see what Lex got her. After receiving what he got me in passing, I was eager to see what he would give her when he actually put thought and effort into it. Avery and Ax had their idiotic bet about it being a dead boy, which I knew it wasn't. The chest was far too small for a whole body to fill it. Unless it was a small child, and no matter how insane Lex was, he wouldn't kill a child. It was more of a medium-size treasure chest, so what could he have possibly filled it with? Dead body parts? *But what would Rayla do with that?*

Rayla's excited gaze fell on the box as she lifted the lid carefully and peeked in. The next second, she made a sound I'd never heard her make. She squealed in a high-pitched delight as she threw the top open. Lex's anxious face twisted up into a glowing smile as he puffed his chest at making her sound like that.

"I can't believe you?! How did you get these! I love them!" She began digging through the chest, her whole head almost completely inside. "Ooooo! They feel so real!"

My left eye twitched, not enjoying the fact that I still didn't know the contents of that chest and why it made her so incredibly happy. *What the fuck was in that chest?!*

Lex grinned up at her. “Well, I thought, what could you possibly get the woman who has everything at her fingertips, and that got me thinking. I mean, when any of us are not here, you now have a replacement! Easy fix!”

“When we’re not here?” Avery’s face pinched in confusion as he casually asked, his eyes traveling back and forth from Rayla to the chest and back again.

“Easy fix?” Ax followed in a gruff voice, scratching his head like he still didn’t understand.

Both Cosmo and I glanced at each other, seeing the curious anticipation eating away at him, which was surely reflected in my own image. We were the ones that liked to control the situation, but with Rayla and Lex in the mix, that seemed to become harder and harder with each day. I was going to need to drink more of this spiked cocoa if I was going to get through today.

Rayla grabbed with both hands from the chest, lifting them up as she sighed in delight, “He got me dicks!” She clutched both of them to her chest, my eyes catching on two very long, flesh-colored items in her hands as she explained, “Well, he really got me your dicks. I could tell my mates dicks from a mile away!”

Her proud voice had me quickly choking on my Baileys and cocoa, covering my mouth so I wouldn’t make a mess as everyone in the room, but Lex and Rayla, stared with wide eyes and dropped mouths. Lex paid us no attention as he went on to tell her how he got them from the best distributor and handpicked the silicone colors from memory. She nodded, looking at a few of them and commenting on the real feeling of the veins and the tips.

“Oh, and they even caught the slight curve in Ax’s-”

The silence was quickly disturbed by a slammed fist on the coffee table as Ax seethed out, “How. The. Fuck. Did you get a mold of my dick, Lex?!”

Lex looked around, shrugging like he couldn’t understand why he was interrupting their conversation for something so trivial.

“Oh, that was easy. I just drugged you all.” He shrugged again, pretending to pour things into a cup. “Mixed a little of this and a little of that, added some stimulant for your dicks,” he winked at us and my eyes narrowed, “and bam, got my drug.”

Throwing his hands over his head, he continued, “I’d already had the molds ready, and once I got you home I zip, zipped.” He mimed unzipping our pants as if it was the most simple thing. He shook his head, his tone growing serious as he looked at each of us. “And I only held your dick for a second. It was very clinical. I promise. I don’t swing that way.” His mouth pitched as he shook his head in disgust. Then turned loving eyes toward Rayla. “I only wanted to get the perfect gift for my rose.”

Her eyes shined as she now held all of our silicone dicks in her arms, cradling them as she nodded. “You want to know what’s better than five dicks? Ten dicks! You all have dick twins!”

Lex beamed up at her, just as excited as she was, leaving the rest of us reeling with the news that Lex had most definitely violated all of us. “Oh! Should we name them?” He asked, and I think that was what broke Ax’s silence as he shot up from his seat, pointing at Lex with murder in his eyes.

“That’s it. I’m sorry, Rayla, but I’m going to have to kill your demon.”

Lex turned, shot up as he threw his hands in the air and rolled his eyes at him. “What now?! Do you want her to play with some other toy, some other random silicone dick while you’re away? What if she’s getting it on with one of us but wants more?” Lex folded his hands and shook his head. “You know she always wants more! I made it so *only* her mates’ dicks would ever touch her.” Then he put the nail in his coffin when he scolded out, “I was really doing us all a favor. You should be thanking me.” I shook my head, knowing what was going to happen next with Ax’s temperament.

Ax swiped out with a clawed hand, but Lex was quick and smoked out just in time. Ax bellowed as he stalked out of the room, “When I find you, Lex Devil, I’m going to skin you alive!”

Lex popped up right behind him as he whispered in his ear, “You’ll have to catch me first.” Ax immediately clawed behind him, but Lex smoked out of existence again as Ax growled and stomped after him.

“You know what, I’m not even surprised anymore,” Avery said as he fell back against the couch, puffing out a laugh, Rayla next to him inspecting her new dicks.

We all heard a loud crash above us and looked up. “Ray,” Cosmo chided, “Shouldn’t you break them up?”

Rayla shrugged. “I’m going to let them hash it out. I get why Ax is so mad, buuuut ...” her eyes turned into brilliant sparkles of rose gold jewels as she followed breathlessly, “I really love my gift.”

“And drugging us?” Cosmo puffed out in annoyance.

She smirked. “I mean ... he did it to me, too, so, I feel like it’s kinda a bonding thing. Like a “we’ve all been drugged by Lex” support group.” Avery chuckled while Cosmo rolled his eyes and sat back. All of us resigned ourselves to living with the unpredictability of Lex’s ideas. It wasn’t like there was any other option. Even if we all kicked Lex out, which Rayla would never let us do, he would just find a way back in again. It wasn’t worth the hassle.

I took another sip, feeling the alcohol warm my belly even if I didn’t feel the effects. I truly enjoyed the taste. I suddenly had a thought, “I’m more curious as to when and how he did it. I don’t remember ever feeling the effects of being drugged.”

That had the others pinch their foreheads in thought when Lex popped in, “Oh, that was easy. Remember that night after we all took out those wanna be gangsters, the Black Ravens? We all went out for drinks ... remember, toward the end of the night, we decided to order that bottle of snake juice?”

It was the only alcohol on the market that could actually make supes drunk magically, but because of that, only a handful are actually made and was very expensive to get your hands on. If I remember correctly, Lex was the one that bought it ... to celebrate.

“Since it was such a fancy bottle, Layla didn’t want to handle it, so I generously offered to serve us the shots. I just put the drug in that. This way, you would think the effects were part of a hangover. Then I dragged your ass’s home and laid you down *real nice*—”

Cosmo put his hand up, “Okay! We get it. I don’t want to know any more details.”

Lex leaned over the couch between Rayla and Avery, giving Cosmo a thumbs up and a wink. “Wanna keep the mystery alive? I get it. My lips are sealed.”

Rayla pulled on Lex’s shirt, turning his head her way, she gave him a long and dirty kiss. “Thank you for my gift. I will treasure all of them.”

Lex cupped her face. “Oh, my rose. I would do anythi- Oh, shit!” He shadowed out just as Ax came out of nowhere and leapt for his legs.

Ax climbed up and turned toward us, shaking with his anger. “What are you all doing?! You should be helping me!” He lumbered off, telling Lex that he will get him eventually.

“Look guys ... it’s raining my mates’ dicks!” Rayla threw them in the air around her, dicks falling everywhere as she laughed and laughed. I hated to admit that it was cute seeing her so joyful.

Avery bent over and picked one up. “Hey! I know you.” Then he lined it up against his own dick in his pants. “You know, this is a very accurate replica. I’m kinda impressed.”

Rayla’s eyes flicked down as she licked her lips, moving forward as she bit the lobe of his ear. “You know ... I think I’m going to need to get a closer look.” Her hand ran over both dicks in his lap. “I want a real in-depth comparison.” She glanced at me and Cosmo. “Of all of you, of course. I don’t want to use anything inferior.”

“Oh, fuck yeah,” Avery said, reaching for his pants just as the front door slammed open and a voice drifted down the hallway.

“Sunshine, we’re back! I hope you’re ready for the best Christmas ever!” Ternin’s voice had all of us freeze. *Oh, fuck. The fathers were back.*

Rayla scrambled off the couch, waving her hands as she whisper-yelled at us in a panic, “The dicks! Get the dicks!”

“What did you say, my little Ray?” Her eyes flew wide toward the hallway as she threw a couple of the cocks into the chest. Avery threw his in and adjusted himself as Cosmo threw one to Rayla, who caught it and threw it in.

Ternin’s voice got closer as I heard Syris whine, “We should’ve told them we were coming at least. What if they’re making my grandbabies right now?! I don’t want to stop that kind of progress!”

“Shut up, Sy!” Ternin growled, “I want to see my daughter for Christmas, and by fucking hell, I will see her for Christmas. Those boys have been in her life for what ... like, five days? I have been with her for her whole life!”

Manic growled out a laugh. “Five days. You’re right. You have always been *so good* at math.”

Their voices were getting closer just as Rayla whispered my name, “Falcon! Your feet!” I looked down to see one of the dicks had made it over to my foot. I quickly grabbed it, holding it up to toss it in the chest when I heard my father’s voice behind me.

“Son. Why do you have a dick in your hand?”

Closing my eyes, I sighed, feeling the back of my neck redden, and not able to answer him as I threw the nude phallic thing in the chest. Rayla slammed it closed and leaned on top of it as she put on the sweetest smile she could muster, acting like nothing just happened. “Welcome back, Dad’s! How was your trip? We missed you!”

Just then, another crash sounded above us, all of us looking up as a familiar demonic manic laughter drifted down, “Oooohhh, you’re gonna be in trouble!”

I exhaled, downed the rest of my drink as I thought to myself ... *It will never be boring with this group.*



ACT 3

"This is all your
fault!"

CHAPTER 1



I ZOOMED OFF AFTER the fuckers that were running in front of me. A shine of blue lit up at their feet, and I snickered. If they thought they could outrun me with magic shoes, they had another thing coming.

“We’ll cut him off on the other end!” Cosmo sounded behind me, and I nodded, knowing he was the only one who could see how fast I was moving.

I cut down the dark alleyway these two fuckers dodged into. I knew this one had two exits; one that went straight to 15th street and the other hooked a left onto Franklin ave. Cosmo and Ax were covering Franklin, which meant that I needed to run straight as fast as I could.

Pushing my feet to move faster, I sliced through the dry, dark air around me, narrowing my gaze on the two demons desperately trying to get away from me. These fuckers thought they could pretend to be a part of the Syndicate and scam the businesses under our protection for money. That was their first mistake. The second was somehow getting the slip on the men we sent after them, forcing us to come out ourselves to take care of this.

Just like I predicted, they split up. One of them went toward Franklin and another kept running straight. I didn’t hesitate to

push forward, the demon peeking back to see if I followed his friend, his eyes blown wide when he saw I was within an arm's length of him. He cursed out, facing forward, and pumped his arms faster. It didn't matter, I was going to get him.

I jumped forward, pushing him down onto the ground as the ally opened up. "Got you, fucker." I quickly turned him around, ready to rain down punches, when his eyes began to bleed black. Tilting my head, I paused. "That's new."

His whole body began to shift, turning into a liquid form right before my eyes. I grabbed at the black liquid, but it slid out of my hands. The rubbery substance made it hard to hold onto, and I watched as it tried to slither away. Oh, fuck no, he was not getting away from me that easily.

I immediately stomped on the slimy puddle, trying to force him to solidify again. I heard a moan of pain and grinned. I went to do it again when a slimy hand shot out, grabbing my ankle and yanking me to the side.

I had a hunch he would try to do that, so in a split second, I made a decision to move my body forward to fall onto the puddle.

Right before I hit the ground, his body solidified. I smirked at my correct assessment of him, knowing he would try to yank me to the side so he could solidify and either run away or try to take me off guard. My win was short-lived because as soon as I landed on him, my chest bloomed with an achy pain I'd never felt before.

It was just my luck that I cried out in pain as Cosmo and Ax came around the corner dragging this douchebag's unconscious friend.

In a flash, Cosmo had me cradled in his arms while Ax was choking out the slimy puddle man. "Did you touch my wife? My fucking mate?!" The demon clawed at his neck as choking sounds drowned out any words he could've said.

"What's wrong, Ray?" Cosmo's concerned voice had my eyes travel up to him as I was holding onto my breasts with both

hands.

I shrugged, huffing out, “I don’t know. I just tackled him, and my boobs hurt. Now, they’re sore.” The whine at the end of my explanation, which made Ax’s hands tighten around the demon’s throat as his eyes bulged out, and his face turned pale.

“You fucking touched my mate’s boobs?” Ax roared in the demon’s face.

Cosmo flicked his eyes up at Ax, a cold detachment in them settled as he turned into commander mode. “Kill him. We have the other.”

Ax smiled as he crushed his windpipe, knowing that it would be painful before a killing blow. The demon wheezed out, not able to breathe as he waved his claws at him. “See ya never.” His claws plunged into the demon’s chest, twisting his arm, and I heard a snap. The tendons keeping the heart intact ripped apart, and the demon’s body slumped as it began to dissolve into that slimy substance, dissipating molecule by molecule.

Cosmo rubbed his nose against my neck, inhaling like I was his last salvation from total destruction. Before I gave into Cosmo’s need for reassurance, Ax wiped his hands on his jeans and came toward us.

His hands were outstretched, and Cosmo slowly compiled with a frown. Baby steps. I had to remind myself the past three years they had grown leaps and bounds from how they used to act with each other.

I couldn’t help my wince at the hand off, not knowing what the fuck was going on with my body, but I could tell you that it fucking sucked. Both their eyes darkened as they stared daggers at the spot the demon used to be.

“I’m fine.” I moved to jump out of Ax’s arms, but he just tightened his grip. I cocked an eyebrow at him.

He huffed, nuzzling into my neck. “Let’s just have you get looked at before we play the fine card.”

I turned to tell Cosmo to back me up, but he was gone, the other demon still unconscious on the concrete. The demon’s

face scrunched up in fear, and I realized they used that new mist Falcon made for us.

Falcon wanted us to test his new concoction in the field. It was geared to incapacitate even the strongest of supes, but he also wanted to see if he could affect their minds. From this point of view, I would have to say it's a success on that front.

A familiar car came screeching around the corner. Cosmo zoomed to the front passenger door, opening it as he motioned for me to sit. A dull ache filled my chest, and I grimaced, my body pressing further up against Ax's always hot body. It was like his chest was a heating pad, and my boobs didn't want to move away.

Closing my eyes, I sighed, "The heat's soothing."

I heard the car door close as soft lips caressed my forehead, Cosmo's deep tone filled the space around me. "Whatever you need, Ray." Followed by a clipped, "Get in the back. I already called a doc, he's waiting at the house."

I cringed. "Guys—"

A growl rumbled from Ax, his chest causing me to bounce a little as he smoothly slipped into Cosmo's car. "Hush, Siren. We're taking over." Cosmo quick dialed someone, telling them to come pick up the demon and take him to the lab.

Huffing out my frustration, I swallowed my pride and snuggled in deeper. "Fine. Have it your fucking way."

"Finally!" Cosmo and Ax said at the same time as the car raced down the street.



It didn't take long to get home, but as soon as the wheels stopped, I saw Avery and Lex racing up to the door to open it.

"What happened?"

Avery's concerned voice called out just as Lex's angry voice growled, "Why the fuck is she even hurt?! What were the two of you even doing?"

Before either could argue, I bit out, “Hey! I’m not dead. Just ... a little sore.”

Lex glared at Ax as he spoke through clenched teeth, “She’s a vampire! Why would she be sore?!” *Join the club! It was confusing me, too.*

“I don’t fucking know.” My voice sounded weak, even to me, and Lex’s eyes flashed down to me, softening as his jaw clenched.

Cosmo cleared his throat, his voice telling me he was hanging on by a thread as he waved his hand toward the door. “That’s why we’re heading to see the doctor. Let’s go.”

He glared around as he clipped out the last words, waving Ax forward. Ax shoved Lex with his shoulder as he passed him by and rushed to the door.

As we crossed the threshold, I heard a familiar no-nonsense voice. “Up here. I have him set up in our room.” I tilted my head, eyes meeting with those arctic crystal blues that made my heart skip a beat at their laser-focused attention on me. Awe, he left his lab because he was worried about me.

I cracked a smile at him as Ax took three stairs at a time. I called out over Ax’s shoulder, “You didn’t have to leave the lab. I know your working on-”

“This is more important,” his eyes searched my face as he followed next to Ax, “You are more important.” I swear, my heart was about to burst out of my chest for those simple but incredibly sweet words.

His cheeks heated, and he faced forward, quickly moving to open our door and escape my melted gaze. Sometimes, he surprised me in the best of ways.

We entered our massive room that took up a whole wing of the second floor. Six beds lined the wall, each section having its own vibe the size of a regular bedroom, only with an open concept feel. Right in the middle was my white, double king with our resident doc standing next to it, scowling at me with his all-seeing spirit mage eyes.

I hated doctors and their judging gazes, but Doc Gage was the worst with his long, dark hair and old soul eyes, ones that looked at grown men like they were children. He used to be around here much more during war times, which happened to be when I was extra rambunctious as a kid. I'd just lost my mom and didn't give a fuck about a lot of stuff, and he witnessed a lot of my stunts gone bad.

"I haven't seen you in a while, Mrs. Desmond What could make your new husband's so worried?" The clipped tone had me rolling my eyes as Ax gently laid me down, eyeing the doctor in a warning, but Doc Gage was used to that. It didn't faze him.

The rest of my mates filtered in and shut the door as I mumbled and looked down at my clenched hands. "It's been three years since the wedding, Doc, I don't think they're *new* anymore... and my boobs hurt."

"Excuse me?" His annoyed tone rang true, making me feel even more like I was a little sissy.

"Just ... check me out. They're sore, and I've never had that happen before." I huffed out, tired of all the commotion that was being made for this. If there was nothing wrong with me, I was going to kill someone just to make me feel better.

Doc Gage rolled his eyes, giving out a lame excuse to leave and my mates all turning a scowl in his direction. I almost cracked a smile when he raised his brow in response to them. I would pay good money to see him go toe-to-toe with my mates.

Falcon broke the macho death stares first. "Please. Look at Rayla."

Doc Gage flicked his eyes toward Falcon, assisting him before sighing out, giving a slight nod before he faced me again. "I'm going to do an overall look, and I need you to be *honest*. Can you do that, young lady?"

I winced at his tone and mumbled out, "Yeah. I guess so."

He smirked, asked me a few questions, and then asked if he could use his magic to run a scan of my body. I nodded to

confirm.

I could feel the agitated vibrations in the air around me. My mates' anxiety, stress, and worry were palpable. Almost suffocating. I was seconds away from asking them all to leave when Doc Gage sat down next to me.

His eyes widened before settling on a hesitant softness that I'd never seen on his face before.

"Oh, fuck, am I dying?"

The words came out of my mouth before I even thought about it, but he simply kept that same creepy, nice smile that was freaking me out.

"No. You're not dying." His attention was completely on me as his smile turned slightly devilish, and he continued. "But it might feel like you are."

I tilted my head, not understanding as my mind jumped to conclusions. Did I get poisoned by that fucking demon? Damn it! I was going to have to tell Cosmo he was right about me being too impulsive.

"What the fuck does that mean?"

"Who do I need to kill?"

"What is your diagnosis?"

"Can we help her?"

"See! This is what I'm always telling you, Ray!"

I could feel all my mates circle around me grow tighter, like a bomb was about to go off, when Doc Gage's stern voice sounded above theirs.

"Calm down! Rayla is pregnant."

The whole room went still, even the air around us seemed to stop as they all slowly turned toward me. My breath stopped just as my heart began to pound against my chest.

My voice was shaky as I asked, "Wwwhaat?"

Doc Gage smiled wider as he patted my hand, stood up, and looked at the guys. "You guys are having a baby."

Congratulations!” He turned back to me. “I’ll need to start seeing you regularly. It looks like you’ll be having a little vampire, which means we’ll need to be giving you regenerative blockers to make sure your body doesn’t reject all the changes that will be happening. Each species has different needs and different things you’ll need to take being the mother, but we can talk about that later.”

He practically skipped to the door as my voice caught in my throat, trying to call him back, but nothing came out.

“All the symptoms you’re feeling are normal, so don’t worry about dying. You’re fine. Oh! And I will tell your fathers. They will be ecstatic to hear the news and have lots of questions. That’s my gift to you all. You’re welcome.”

Our dads ... Oh, fuck.

The door shut behind him, and I finally looked at my mates, all of them with varying emotions. Happiness, fear, love, excitement, worry; all of their feelings mimicked my own.

“Well,” I gulped, “the next few months are going to be interesting.”

CHAPTER 2



“GET DRESSED, MY FIERCE girl, I’m taking you out tonight!”

Rayla looked up from her bed, legs crossed with her hair in a messy ashy bun as she violently flipped the page of the latest supernatural fashion magazine I got her. “Are you sure I’m even allowed to?” Her tongue ran over her teeth as she narrowed her eyes on me. “Ever since we found out I’m pregnant, you *neanderthals* have been making me stay indoors like I’m some breakable doll!” She slammed her hands on both sides of the bed, glaring up at me like everything for the past two weeks had been solely my fault. I could take the blame for some of it, to be precise, one fifth of the blame, but that was it.

I leaned against the wall, watching my gorgeous mate in her furious glory, smirking at her sassy little mouth with those kissable lips I could never be tired of. “And that’s why I’m taking you out to have some fun. The others don’t have to know.” I mean, I did mention to them I was going out tonight ... I just didn’t tell them I was planning on taking Rayla with me. *Damn it. Lex was rubbing off on me.*

I wiggled my brows at her as I smirked, her eyes lighting up as she popped up onto her knees on the bed. “Really? I can get

out of this mate prison?!”

Taking offense, I crossed my arms and frowned. “Mate prison? I don’t think that’s a fair assessment” I pointedly looked around our lavish, enormous room with all the comforts she could possibly want at her disposal.

She slid off the bed, marched up to me as she scowled. “No. What’s not fair is having *five mates* who have now ganged up on me to keep me in this house under the guise of protection.” She added quotes and a roll of the eyes to that last word, but we really were trying to keep her and our baby safe.

I slowly slid my arms around her, smirking as I bent over to make a trail of kisses on her collarbone. “We just want to keep you and the baby safe. The doc said that since it was a vampire, the little magic bean inside of you was taking all of the blood you’re ingesting. That partnered with the regenerative blockers is making it so that your body is-”

She hissed in my ear, and I remember how she almost bit off Ax’s head, literally, when he called her body weak.

“Less healable?” My question had her lift her lip in disgust, but she let me keep kissing along her shoulder. I kept my head on today, so I was going to call that a win.

“I’m not even showing yet. It’s not very real for me except for throwing up all the damn time.” She grumbled, her body sagging into mine, and I knew all her fire was draining out of her fast, so I took advantage.

“That’s why, my fierce girl, I wanted to take you out dancing!” The past few weeks have been a whirlwind of changes. Our fathers and doctors telling her what to do and not do, as well as having macho, overprotective mates that were demanding she be with one of us at all times. I could tell she was trying to keep her cool for the baby, but her eyes would occasionally flash with anger, one that seemed to be pointed at everything and everyone. She probably hated all the changes currently going on in her life, and I wanted to help. Wanted to remind her that she was still herself, and herself just needed to have a little fun.

“Really?” She squinted at me like I was lying. “Like going out of this house and off this compound?”

Smiling down at her, I gave her my hundred watt smile and nodded. “Yes, Ray. You’re going to put on your best and sexiest Salsa dress, and we’re going to dance the night away.” I did a little foot action and booty shake, showing her the moves I had been practicing for just this occasion. I didn’t want her and Rick to be the only ones to have this kind of fun.

“Ohhhh! Someone has been practicing!” She squealed before yanking her shirt off as she turned and ran off to her closet. “Nope. No. Not this one.” Clothes were flying out of the closet in rapid succession, and I bit my lip to keep my laugh from spilling out.

“My fierce love, do we need to go shopping? It looks like you dumped out your whole wardrobe.” I hopscotched my way over to the closet door just as her pale back appeared.

“I think this will work. What do you think?” My eyes were glued to the backless, deep red V of the dress she was wearing. The whole dress fit her like a glove, fabric holding onto her body for dear life as it went to her knees at an angle, ruffles on the end that would flare out when she twisted and twirled. Two thin straps barely wrapped around her arms, keeping the top up, and I licked my lips. My hands had a mind of their own as I traced one finger down the center of her back, causing her skin to jump. I liked that.

I felt a rapid thumping in the middle of my chest, right where our bond connected us, and I knew she was feeling just as affected as I was. I kneeled, my lips finding that spot where the fabric and her skin met, biting down right above her ass.

Her husky voice shuddered as she scolded, “Hey, don’t start that. I’ve been waiting forever to leave this place.”

My hands snuck underneath the fabric in the front, rising up as I stood. Cupping her large, heaving breasts, I whispered in her ear, “Then you shouldn’t have worn this dress.” She groaned out, about to argue breathlessly when I cut her off. “We’ll be leaving here, I promise, but right now,” I unzipped myself as I yanked up the back of her dress. I exhaled when I saw she was

going commando. “Right now, I need your body, just so that I don’t fuck you on the dance floor in front of everyone.”

“And would that be so bad?” She cooed as she shoved her ass against my rock hard cock.

I ran myself along her ass, tweaking her nipples as I shoved myself between her thighs, smearing her wetness all over my cock. “So soft. So fucking wet. I’m going to fuck you, Rayla. Then we’ll go dancing. I swear it.”

She giggled as she nodded, “I will hold you to that promise in blood.” She snagged one of my hands and sunk her fangs into my wrist. I moaned into her hair, taking in her scent as she filled herself with my blood.

“Also, if you ruin this dress, I will kill you.”

Resting my forehead on the back of hers, I took in another big whiff just as I positioned myself at her entrance. “Wouldn’t dream of it, my fierce girl.”

Her cries filled the air, and I knew nothing could ever top the high I got when I was with her, my wife, my mate.



We were having a good time. I messed up a few steps, but I felt like I was holding my own. I had to remind myself that she was almost a fucking professional Salsa dancer, and I was just a little beginner, although Rayla never made me feel that way.

She would tell me how well I was doing and how she was excited to have another Salsa dancer in the family. I just wanted to see her smile again. I didn’t care if I looked like an idiot or had to take a million dance lessons, her smile alone was worth all the effort.

The song changed as she twisted her hips, hypnotizing me as she circled around me. Her eyes penetrated my soul as she smirked, twisting around again before snagging the back of my head and slamming our bodies together.

My dick, already half hard, rose to the attention her grinding pussy was giving us. Our bodies melted into one another,

moving in a fluid motion like we were one. Digging my hands into her ass, grinding on her as neither of us lost eye contact was addicting. I was about to ask her if she wanted to move this to another place. The hotel across the street, the back alley, the fucking bathroom. I didn't give a flying fuck, but I wanted this dick-hypnotizing goddess again, right now, forever.

All of my rushed plans went down the drain as soon as some over-cologned mother fucker spun around next to us, and Rayla's face pinched. It took only one second for her to cover her mouth, eyes widening as she turned and ran for the bathroom.

I ran after her, knowing what was coming and wishing that it was me that had to deal with this instead. Her heaving broke my heart as I stood guard at the door, hearing the gargled liquid plopping into the toilet. Morning sickness was a bitch.

She had been complaining to us that she felt fine, other than the morning sickness she would get, but it was getting worse and worse each day. Some days, it was a certain smell or action that could bring this up. Sometimes it was just the time of the day or something she ate that didn't agree with her, but every time, all of us mates winced, feeling terrible that we couldn't help her with this. That she was the one that had to suffer so much just to have our baby.

Of course, that was only the five of us. Her father, on the other hand, was a different story.

When he noticed that she was throwing up more frequently, he developed a bad habit of saying, "Looks like the baby disagreed", "Oh, I don't think the baby liked that", "Well, if that's what the baby wants." She blew up at him the other day, telling him that if he didn't shut his fanged mouth, she would use barbed wire to sew his lips together. That had him going quiet.

Some lady came over to the bathroom, and I growled at her, legitimately growling until she backed off, giving me a bewildered look. I was finding out that having a mate that was pregnant with your child was taking my psyche back to the old

days of mates wanting to tear off anyone's head that stepped in their pregnant mate's direction. No one was going to get to her, no one.

A faucet turned on, and I stuck my head in the door, keeping my voice light, not wanting to wake up the rage monster. "Hey, Ray, can I get you anything?" She spit out some water, running red with my blood she ingested earlier as she glanced up at me, eyes back to glaring at everything that moved. Well, there goes our date.

She yanked on the paper towels, rubbing her hands together furiously. "Avery, why the fuck do they call it morning sickness when its really just at-the-drop-of-a-hat sickness? Huh?! Why is the world lying to women?!" She chucked the paper towels into the trash, hands clenching the edge of the counter as she kept her head down and cried out, "Why the fuck does this suck so much?"

My feet pushed me forward, circling my arms around her as she half-heartedly tried to push me away. "No. I just threw up. I fucking stink. It's gross."

"Then we're going to be gross together," I proclaimed, tightening my arms around my amazing woman. "I don't give a shit. I fucking love you." Tilting her head up, I wanted to make sure she looked in my eyes as I told her this next part. "You are growing *our* baby in here." I gently ran one finger over her flat stomach. "You're fucking amazing. Nothing you do from now on will be too much, too gross, or will turn me away from you."

Her eyes softened as they filled with vulnerability and she looked away. "Even if you don't know who's baby this is? You won't be disappointed in the baby ... in me?"

I grabbed her head in my hands, gripping her hard enough for her to focus only on me as I kissed her gross, throw up mouth, whispering along her lips, "I know what I got into. Plus, that baby is mine. Is ours. I don't give a shit if every single one of them has a baby with you before me, they're all *my* babies. I will cut anyone that even tries to say something different. They are a part of you, a part of us. Don't ever doubt the total

devotion I have for you and our future children again.” Water gathered in her eyes as she saw the truth in my own.

“Gods, why the fuck am I being so crazy?” She let out an embarrassing laugh as her arms circled me.

I couldn’t help it as I sassed, “I mean ... you’ve always been a little-,” her eyes zeroed in on me as her nails dug into my back in warning. I chuckled. “It’s just a different kind of crazy. A cute kind. The kind that drives all of us to be crazy, too.” I kissed her nose, and her lips twitched.

“I guess if I’m going crazy,” she rubbed her body against mine, her eyes giving me a salacious look, “then it’s only fair that you all go crazy with me.” She tapped her chest, giving me the sign that I can open the bond and peek into her heart.

I focused, opening the bond like a door, and a flood of feelings swarmed me. Fear, anger, hurt, anxiety, need, want, future, happiness; all of them wrapped up around me, choking me just as she pulled back and shut the door.

“Yep. We’re going to be super crazy together. No one should have to feel that alone.” I rubbed my thumb along her cheek, letting her know that I was here, that none of that scared me. That even though she was this ultra badass women that could lead a gang of hardened men, she was also a woman that was having her body fucked with, feeling things she wasn’t used to, but that didnt mean she was any less than the stunning, amazing woman she’d always been.

She gave a tired sigh, leaning her head against my chest as she let me hold her. “Thank you, Avery. I love you.”

Her soft words made me choke up. “I love you, my fierce girl.”

She sighed again before wiping her face and looking up at me with clear eyes. “Let’s go home ... and maybe kill that fucker with the cologne. That was offensive on so many levels, not just to my pregnancy nose.”

I nodded, already planning on how I was going to serve up a piece of his body to her as a gift, after I washed off the

cologne, of course. “You got it. One dead smelling fucker coming up.”

CHAPTER 3



FALCON

“THAT’S NOT THE RIGHT kind of taco.”

My fist clenched around the white plastic bag. *Calm down, Falcon. She is pregnant. She is the one that needs to be satisfied with the sustenance.* Inhaling, I glanced down at Rayla, who was now toeing the perfectly fine taco away from her in disgust.

“I purchased this at Alma’s, just like you requested.” I was trying and failing to make some sort of sense about why she was refusing to eat the taco from the restaurant that she requested.

I would’ve gone to Nana’s, but she went on a two week vacation to Mexico to see some of her remaining members of her human family. Ever since then, Rayla has been practically intolerable when it came to her food, only wanting Mexican food but not being happy with anything we have returned with.

She got up off the couch, circling her arms around me as she spoke to my chest. “I know. I’m sorry.” Her small whine broke my indifference, and I sighed out, giving up on my resentment. It wasn’t her fault. It was that damn fetus. That little vampire was starting to become a little demon in my eyes. Did the doctor get the testing wrong?

Tilting up her head, balancing her chin on my chest, she blinked those pleading rosy gold eyes my way. “I didn’t know until I smelled it that it was wrong. The baby has a better sense of smell than I do.”

“Might as well be a fucking elephant.” I huffed under my breath, but even with her body being slightly weaker, it seems her hearing was just fine.

She pushed away from me, glaring daggers. “What the fuck does that mean?”

My mind scrambled, trying to figure out the best way to get out of this, but I simply blurted out rapidly, “Elephants are the animals that have the best sense of smell. They have around two thousand genes associated with smell.” The more I spouted off statistics, the softer her eyes got, and I knew I was going in the right direction.

“Oh. I’m sorry, Falc.” Her lips turned up as she reached up, laying her palm on my cheek. “I thought you were dissing on our baby, and I was about to flip out on you.” She lightly kissed my lips, turned with a smile, and sat back down.

I *definitely* was complaining about this baby, but I was never going to tell her that. I was going to take that to my grave.

The past five weeks had been a major adjustment for all of us, but for the first time in my existence, I was lagging behind the others. While all of them were excited in their own ways, I was having a hard time connecting all the massive changes for something that wasn’t here yet.

Avery was ordering custom clothing, Gucci shoes and Marc Jacobs onesies, every week, gushing over how “fly” our child was going to look. As soon as the doctor said Rayla was pregnant, Ax dropped to his knees, begging Rayla to be able to come up with a fight training schedule for our child, one that all of us would have separate segments of, but first, they needed to learn the basics from him. Lex was practically dancing as soon as he heard, telling Rayla how he would start making a handmade, custom, miniature knife set for the kid, dreaming of showing them how to stalk their prey. Cosmo was the one to take the practical route and picked out the safest

part of the house to start to build a nursery, causing a lot of new construction to our room and floor. All of them showed how excited they were while I was having a hard time just grasping the concept.

I couldn't connect to something I couldn't see, couldn't feel, couldn't understand. All I knew was that this thing that was the size of a pea was fucking with my life and my wife. Making my mate lose weight from all the throwing up and feel horrible every day. I didn't think I would ever have to worry about that with a vampire partner, but I also have never been around a pregnant supernatural woman before.

The doctor was also not helpful. Every phone call, email, and discussion I have with him about my concerns for Rayla's health were practically dismissed. He kept saying, "Rayla is fine and the baby is fine. Don't worry so much." It pissed me off. So much so that I decided I was going to go for my doctorate in medicine. I already had one in chemistry and mechanics, one more would be easy, and I could have it completed before the next child comes, and I would be ready to fight this doctor.

"Please, don't kill me, but ..." Rayla's hesitation made me relax my face, making sure I looked approachable ... or as close I could get. *For Rayla*. That was my new motto.

"I need you to go to Jack in the box and get two monster tacos." I opened my mouth to argue that fast food was no source of nutrients for her or the baby, I knew that, but she put her hands together, whispering, "Please, please. I promise to eat it. I swear. I'm so hungry." That melted all of my nutritional resolve.

Keeping my sigh in, I nodded as I turned around and opened the door to get my mate her damn over-processed tacos. I was two steps outside when she called out, "Wait!"

I turned around just in time to catch her jumping into my arms, attacking my face with her lips as she kissed me all over. When she began to nibble my ear, my cock responded quickly, and she pulled away with a sassy smile, shoving the plastic

bag with my failed taco in it. “And take this with you. Love ya!” Then she closed the door, and I was left speechless.

I looked down, left half-hard with a taco in hand, and shook my head at the state of my life. There was nothing else to do but turn and head out to get the disgusting food my mate wanted, trying to figure out what the baby could possibly like about this Jack in the Box taco that this perfectly crafted one in my hand didn't have.



After the whole taco debacle, Ax showed up and took over Rayla duties, keeping her nice and toasty, curled up on the couch while they watched some slasher movie that they both laughed at. He nodded my way. “I got this. Don't you have work to do?”

I did, so I gave Rayla a kiss goodbye, meaning it to be just a peck, but she turned it into a whole tongue and teeth action before letting me go, saying she didn't want to keep me from inventing cool things for her. Taking that as the complement it was, I took my love sick ass down into my labs.

Sitting at my workbench in my office, screwing and placing things in order to make them work, I felt all my stress and uncertainty melt away. This was where I was comfortable, where everything made sense. Everything was tracked and calculated with math and numbers, but up there, it was all feelings and educated guesses.

Even the baby books I was reading had several variables and open time slots. Worst still was that even if something did have a definitive answer, it was always followed up with “and even still, all of this might not even work for *your* baby”. What the fuck was up with that? That's why I was reading the damn book in the first place. It's supposed to be a step-by-step manual on pregnancy and how it all works. Halfway through, I threw the book in the trash, realizing it was just a jumble of “maybe's” and “should's”, nothing about all of this made any sense.

Then I would look at Rayla and her frustrated, anxious, and hesitant face, and I realized I was not in this on my own. She also had some of the feelings that I did, and she was carrying the damn thing. So I decided to put my worries and frustrations in check, but I was still having a hard time connecting her body and the baby. She wasn't even showing, but her body was massively changing on the inside ... or at least that's what the damn book said.

My phone beeped. The alarm said that it was time for me to head to the doctors office and meet the others for Rayla's ultrasound appointment. My father said that this appointment was the one that changed his mind about having kids. When I asked him to explain, he shook his head and told me it was something you had to experience.

I entered the lobby to find Lex was already standing, telling Avery and Rayla all about the job he just came from.

“And you would think this idiot would've got out of the way, but no. His head went, *bam*, right through the knife. I had a little too much force to it, and I ended up smashing his face into his computer. Man! How that body sizzled right in front of me ... it was like a work of art!”

Rayla's eyes tracked all of his moments with a wistful expression like she wished she was there with him to see all the action. Avery rolled his eyes but kept quiet, rubbing her back, letting Lex have his moment before he recognized me.

“Hey, Falc! Right over here.” He waved me over as I frowned at him.

“My name is Falcon.”

He grinned from ear to ear. “Yeah, but Rayla calls you Falc.”

“That is her. You have not been given that privilege.” Rayla laughed, poking at Avery in jest when I remembered who I was talking around. I turned my head toward Lex. “And that is *not* an invitation to annoy me just because it's amusing.” My voice deepened, making sure he understood my warning.

Lex lifted his palms up, smiling like the insane person he was. “Naw. I learned my lesson last time when you electrocuted me

on purpose. You're a vicious little nerdy mage."

I huffed out my annoyance as Cosmo came out from the doctor's side of the office. "Doctor's ready for us. Since it's such a large group, we had to move some things around."

Avery and Lex took Rayla's arms in theirs as Cosmo led the way.

"Wait! I'm here! Wait for me!" Ax came barreling through the office door. The hinges creaked and the door slanted when he let go. He looked at us then back at the door he just ruined, rubbing the back of his neck.

An older looking nurse popped up from her chair, touched the door, and whispered out some rune words. The door automatically fixed itself, looking almost new. "Don't worry, sweetie. All werewolf daddies ruin this door at least once in the nine months." She patted his arms, and he sheepishly trudged up beside me.

We all moved into the room, and although Cosmo said they cleared it out, the six of us barely fit with the x-ray tech. She instructed Rayla to lay down, all of us circling around her from head to toe, all facing toward the screen. The woman told her to pull her shirt up, and not to be surprised by the cold jelly that was being squirted onto her.

"Don't worry about it. I run cold," Rayla joked, trying to keep it light as always, but her eyes kept drifting to the screen next to her, and I had a feeling that was the opposite of what she was feeling on the inside.

I don't know why, but I felt this pull coming from the bond, letting me know that she needed me right now. I slid my hand into hers closest to me, her eyes snapped to mine. "Everything is going to be fine. We're here with you."

Her eyes widened, mouth dropped open, when I heard a squirt. "Shit! You're not wrong." Rayla's attention swiveled to the tech, who gave her a small smile before she took that wand and started to make circles on her belly. I expected Rayla to pull away, but my heart squeezed when her hand tightened on mine, not letting me go for a second.

“I just see a black blob ... is that supposed to happen?”

I was trying hard not to bark out how idiotic Ax was when Rayla laughed nervously. “I mean ... is he wrong? I don’t see anything?” Even with her body strength being taken by the baby, she gripped my hand so hard I thought it was going to break.

Cosmo combed his fingers through her hair, leaning down toward her ear. “It might take a second. Just wait. All good things come to those that wait.”

Lex huffed, rubbing circles on the arm of the hand I was holding, “For once, my rose, listen to your brother. I finally agree with him.” The ultrasound tech’s head snapped up, looking between Cosmo and Rayla, but not saying anything.

Cosmo glared at Lex, his whole face saying there would be retribution, but since Rayla’s eyes were glued to the screen, mumbling at Lex to calm down, Cosmo let the jab go. For now.

Avery had his hand on her thigh, not able to tear his gaze away from the screen as Ax’s hand rested on her ankle while he squinted like he could see it better that way.

Each of us touched her, connected with her in support.

I heard it before I saw anything. The steady thump of a rapid heartbeat.

“There’s your baby’s heartbeat. Strong and healthy.”

The moment I heard that steady melody of our baby’s heart, my whole world changed. My mind and emotions collided, having not only proof but this overwhelming feeling to make sure that heart beat went on forever. It was real. This baby was real and here. Right in her belly, growing and making sounds on its own. My baby. Her baby. Their baby. Our baby.

It made me want to buy a chemistry and mechanical set. *They make those for babies, right?*

“Shit. I think my heart just grew.” No one commented on Ax’s words as, for once, we were all one in the same. No one left

behind or felt any different. All six of us were stunned and in awe of that little pea inside of my mate.

“They are going to rule the world.” Her words were not only a breathless promise but a vow to this little baby that we would do anything for them. All of us men looked at each other, nodding in silence as we all made our own silent agreement. This baby was ours and would want for nothing.

CHAPTER 4



I'M SO EXCITED TO be going home to see my glowing rose and the little demon... I yanked my phone out of my pocket and tapped on the baby app I downloaded as soon as we knew she was pregnant. It was specially tailored to supernatural's and would tell me all I needed to know about our little vampire and the stages of their growth.

Tapping on the child number one tab, it listed out all the current facts. The baby was marked as a vampire, and we were at sixteen weeks of pregnancy, which means that it was the size of an ... avocado. It's a little demon avocado!

Clutching my phone, I ran into the house, ignoring the guards outside the compound. They knew the deal, if they didn't bother me, I wouldn't cut them for getting in my way. Most of them looked away when I came around, mumbling their welcomes to boss Devil. I still haven't gotten used to that, and I probably never will. I really only wanted Rayla, being any sort of ambitious to get her attention, but now that she was my mate, my wife, and now my baby mama ... well there was really no going back for her now, was there. That made my heart giddy.

I trapped her fair and square!

Sure. There were a couple others that were in the mix, but it was all good. She needed them, and I was finding them to be a lot less annoying these days. In fact, they were kinda fun to play with. Who knew Falcon had a sneaky, vengeful side! And Avery had started to agree with me half the time, while Cosmo mainly ignored me until I started to agree with him half the time, and Ax ... well that fucker was the funniest little shit to play with. He gets *so* mad about *so* much.

Shadowing my way up the stairs and into our joint room, I found my rose with her little cute baby bump wobbling on a chair as she tried to reach at the top of the weapons shelf. I noticed she was desperately trying to grab at her favorite gun, the one that mimicked Falcon's magic bullet gun with a few custom modifications.

Last week, we had decided to put it up there with a barrier around it because as soon as that sucker was in her hands, she went wild. She got drunk off power, shooting at anything that moved, and rode magical circles like she was surfing drunk. The gun was dangerous in her hands normally, but pregnant Rayla was a chaotic menace, threatening ice cream clerks to split their body in half unless they hand picked out the blood filled bunny tracks in one ice cream and manually added them to the green mint chocolate one. That day, even I thought she'd gone a little cuckoo.

Leaning against the doorway, I smiled, crossing my ankles as I watched her curse and try to get on her tippy toes. "Whatcha doing, my rose? You know that's a no-no toy."

I must've spooked her because she gasped, hands lifted as she backed up one foot on the stool she was standing on. In slow motion, I could see her toe not hit the edge like she was counting on, and she began to pinwheel her arms as she was falling backwards. I shadowed my way over to her, and I caught my rose easily as she grumbled about her damn annoying mates making her a bubble girl.

Snuggling my nose into the crook of her neck, I took a long, deep sniff, sucking down that sugary, floral scent that set my heart at ease but my blood pumping. "Oh, my rose, if you only

knew my deep seeded desires to keep you all to myself ... I think you would hate me.”

She stopped squirming around, clapping both her hands on my face as she placed her forehead on mine. Her golden pink orbs swirling with determination. “Let’s get one thing straight, I already have an idea of what’s in your head, and it doesn’t scare me. In fact, it excites me.” She licked her lips, looking at mine with hunger. “One, I’ll just escape whatever you try to cage me in, and two, you like me out in the world, causing trouble. That’s your second favorite word.”

My body grew taut, my fingers curling around her waist, forcing her to stay where she was, giving me all her attention. A demon mate could get used to this. “If that’s so, what’s my first favorite word?”

She pulled back an inch, glancing down at my arms wrapping around her like a boa constrictor. “That’s easy. My rose.”

Yanking her close, backing her up step by step as I whispered along her plump, fleshy lips. “That’s two words, cheater, but it’s correct, anyways.” I pushed her back against the bed, cuffing both her hands next to her head as I made sure to keep my weight off her, placing my lips along her chin. “Now, what was my exquisite mate doing?”

Her chest rose and fell, brushing up against mine as she called out in a husky voice, “She was trying to get her favorite toy as I heard from some guards downstairs talking about a young group of mages trying to group up against us. I knew I could take on a few mages with that weapon, not even breaking a sweat.”

I ran my right hand up the side of her body, cupping her growing breasts tenderly, watching her eyes flicker as I ran my thumb over her nipple. One of the benefits of her being pregnant was her breasts were extra sensitive, the lightest touch would send her reeling. “You know that they wouldn’t be happy with you trying to do that, especially on your own.”

Plucking at her pebbled nipple, she gasped, pinching her eyes shut as she was trying to think. Probably trying to come up with a snappy comeback, but her body bent up toward mine,

silently begging me for more attention. My heart thumped as my dick grew. It was the best when she was feeling so good she couldn't think. That meant I was doing my job right.

I knew that if I kept going, I was going to lose all resolve, taking her past the point of no return, spending all my time finding those new pleasure points she's developed, but that was not what my rose wanted.

Remembering the determination in her eyes from earlier, I growled at myself as I sunk my hand into the plush down comforter, pushing myself up to look at her. It seemed my rose needed more attention than sex. "Talk to me, my rose. What's going on?"

She huffed back onto the bed, her body going lax as she closed her eyes and took a breath. "I just don't feel like myself anymore." She opened her eyes, the gold specks sparkled brighter as her face pinched in pain. "I used to be this badass bitch, one that her enemies feared and her subordinates respected, but now I'm just some stupid bubble girl." She shuffled as her eyes watered, but she refused to let them spill over. "Kept locked up tight, a mate with me at all times like I'm a child. I used to feel alive when my hands were covered in blood, now I'm only able to watch it on TV." She looked away as she finished, her cheeks blooming under my gaze.

"You have to know that you are the most important person in this family, the only one who matters above all else." She rolled her eyes, but I grabbed her chin and made her face me. "I'm serious, my rose. It's the only reason all of us are going bonkers and agreeing with each other." I chuckled under my breath. "You know that it's amazing that we have all found one thing, only one, that we all agree on, and that's making sure that you and our baby are safe." I placed a hand gently on her small bump. "You both are the only people that matter to us. More than the dad's, more than the Syndicate, and definitely more than each other. We just want to make sure that you both are happy and healthy."

Her face softened with each word, nodding, understanding, even if she still had a hint of sadness behind her half smiles. While she was obviously healthy, she seemed to be unhappy,

and that was the opposite of what I wanted. The opposite of what we should be doing for her. Plus, having a happy mommy meant that we would have a happy baby.

I kissed her right cheek, moving slowly over to her left. “I have an idea ...” This could be a very bad idea or a very good one, looked like I would find out today. “Do you want to go with me on a job?”

Her eyes lit up as she opened her mouth, but I knew I had to lay out the ground rules before she used her honey words to get me to agree to anything unsafe. I might like to beat my own drum and make my own rules, but if the four others all ganged up on me, I was sure that they could give me a run for my money. Lifting my finger against her lips, I laid out the rules. “First, you have to agree to follow every word I say. I mean it.” She nodded her head too fast for my liking. “Also, stick by me like glue. I want you within arms reach at all times.” She nodded again, this time, her tongue came out and swiped along my finger.

Shuttering as my eyes hooded, I forced myself to continue. “And last but not least, you will not make a single violent move without my permission.” This she growled at, biting that finger, but it had the opposite effect as I liked her bites far too much, and I moaned.

“Oh, my rose, I think you need to take that edge off.”

Sliding my body down, I gathered her pants, fisting that stretchy material as I yanked the fabric down her legs but not past her ankles. Effectively keeping her legs cuffed. I found my spot underneath her pants and settled myself between her thighs.

She let out a shaky breath as I ran two fingers down her slit and spread them, looking at her juicy center with a lick of my lips. “Fuck, I guess we’re both going to get a little edge off.” I unbuckled and unzipped my pants with one hand, letting my cock spring out, running my hand along it.

Pushing up to her elbows, she watched with a savage hunger as I pumped my hand up and down my cock, watching her

pulsing pussy throb for me. “Your pussy is so pretty, my rose. I could stare at it all day and never get bored.”

“She has always enjoyed your attention, in lots of different ways.” Her husky voice set my veins on fire, and I bent forward, having had enough of this waiting business.

“Oh,” I ran my nose along her center, catching that sweet and salty scent that was all hers and made my mouth water. “Attention she will get.” Keeping my fingers spread wide, I gave fat licks to each of her swollen pussy lips, licking my way to her center like a lollipop.

Her long, low moan had me speeding up as I flicked my tongue along her opening, rimming it with my tongue until her hips jerked up. “Please,” she sobbed, “please, fuck me. Stick something inside of me. I need it.”

I always obeyed my queen’s demands, shoving three fingers inside of her as her back lifted off the bed, and she cried out at the entry. “Fuck. Oh, fuck. Yes. Fuck me with those fingers.” Her heels dug into my back, pushing me closer and closer. My mate was a greedy bitch, and I loved it.

I flicked my tongue on her clit in time with my fingers fucking her pussy hole, making sure she didn’t have enough time to overthink what was going on. It didn’t take long for one of her hands to grasp the bed, and one yanked on my hair, moving my head in tempo with her hips that thrust hard on my fingers. She was practically fucking herself as she used my body, and I was in heaven.

She needed this. To feel in control, dominant. Be the one in charge. With all the changes that had been happening around her, this was one way to take some of that feeling back. Plus, I didn’t mind. I would do anything for my rose, whatever she needed, I was all in all the time.

Her thighs started to tremble as her pussy gripped my fingers like a Chinese finger trap, and I knew she was close, she just needed a little push.

She was so wet that her juices were overflowing past my three fingers, and I easily slipped my thumb in, soaking it good

before pushing it into her puckered entrance.

She gasped, her whole body tightened, and I teetered my hand quickly, fucking her ass with my thumb then shoving my three fingers down her channel until she screamed out her release.

I shoved my head down, catching as much of her sweet release as I could get on my tongue before I flicked her sensitive nub, causing her body to jerk as I squeezed every drop out of her.

Just as she sagged against the bed, I lifted to my knees, grabbed my solid cock, and tugged on it as I watched my mate come down. She was so beautiful, glowing, and vibrant. At times like these, I didn't know how on this Earth I deserved such an exquisite, sexy mate, who was now having our child.

Her eyes found mine as she smiled at my throbbing cock in my hand. She licked her lips, turned around, and shoved her ass up in the air, taking two of her fingers to spread herself, exposing herself to me completely. "Do you like what you see? Do you like seeing how you made me feel? How much cum is dripping out of me? You did that. You made me this way."

I don't know how she knows just what filthy things to say to get me going, but she does. My balls tightened, and I moaned as I shot my cum out, covering her ass and pussy with my sticky mess. As the last bit was working its way out, I grabbed her hips and rammed my cock between her soft, milky thighs and moaned as I finished.

That was a perfect way to start a job.



The crunch of the gravel below brought me back to reality as I remembered that I was bringing my pregnant wife to work with me. The pregnant wife who had other mates that specifically told me she needed to lay low and not do any strenuous work. *Did going into an abandoned warehouse to kill a group of wannabe gangsters who stole from one of our strip clubs count?*

I glanced down at my mate beside me, eyes wide, body shaking in excitement with her magic gun in hand. She hasn't looked this alive in a while, and my conscience was split in two. I wanted to follow orders and keep her and the baby safe, but I also wanted to help her not lose herself just because she was going to be a mom.

She grabbed my hand, peering up at me as she was bursting with energy. Fuck. I was going to keep to my word. I can't let that face drop in disappointment. I turned her to face me and put on my Cosmo hat. "Rayla, I'm serious. You need to stay with me and let me handle it."

Her lips pursed, and I couldn't help how cute she was and gave her a quick kiss, but back to serious mode I went. "No. I will be the one to put the smack down on these fuckers. Plus, it's my job." I reminded her, hoping that she would just be excited to be around the action.

She turned her head to the side for a second before turning back to me with a smile. "How about this? I will do that until you are down to one. That one I get to kill."

I groaned up at the sky, frustrated with my situation because that wasn't a bad deal. I was going to be there, and one guy was simple. If anything went sideways, I could always shadow her away ... but what if this fucker was crafty?

"How about this, I will kill all of them but one, tie that one to a chair, and then you can have at it. How about that?" *That's super safe, right?*

"Deal!" She grabbed my hand and shook it before taking steps toward the entrance. That seemed too quick of a response for her, and I glared at her back. What was she trying to do? How was she scheming to get more?

"Come on," she called over her shoulder, "I promise I'm not planning anything. I just need little action, and I'll be a good girl and take what I can get."

When I crossed my arms and narrowed my eyes at her, she gave me a sheepish look as she mumbled out, "And if I'm good then maybe you can take me out again?"

“And there it is.” I jabbed my finger out at her. “That’s why you’re a bad girl. Always wanting more. You’re insatiable.”

Her lips curled into a vicious grin. “But that’s what you like about me.”

I nodded because it was. It’s on the top five of my one hundred things I love about Rayla Desmond list. One I keep adding to daily.

“Play by the rules today, fake good girl.” She gave me a thumbs up as she waited for me to take the lead.

I had already scouted the place earlier, figuring out when was the best time to take them out. With Rayla’s early rising schedule, it was perfect timing to get them all right before they woke up.

We went through a side door that led out to the dumpsters, making our way through the trash-riddled floor of the warehouse. You could see broken bottles and makeshift cardboard houses that the homeless used, but they were most likely kicked out swiftly when this little group took this spot.

Yesterday I had scoped out this group and found them to be a collective of idiotic vampires. There was only one smart one of the group that, if she played her cards right, could’ve worked for the Desmond clan, but that’s where her ego came in. She didn’t like to take orders, but she liked to give them. The leader’s name was Jenny, but she told people it was Viper. It was so adorable when these little idiots thought they were so badass just because of a name.

“So to clarify,” Rayla whispered, “I get to kill anyone that comes at me or someone that I see coming after you?”

I gave her the side-eye. “I can take care of myself.”

“Sure. Sure. You got it, my smoky stalker.” She chuckled at her own joke, and I grinned. She looked so beautiful when she smiled. I don’t care what any of them say when they find out, this little trip was worth it.

I slowly pushed open the double doors and pointed to the end of the hallway. “They like to keep to one room, an office around the corner. When we get close, I’m going to be the one

to go in, and you will hang out by the door, covering my back just in case one of them went out to go pee or something. Got it?”

She slid the safety off, clicking the barrel around to the bullet she wanted at the ready. “Got it, Boss.”

I huffed out a laugh, knowing full well that she was the boss of my heart, and her being here was proof of that. We moved forward slowly, in sync with each other as we focused on getting our prey. It made my skin crawl in eagerness, wanting to put on a good show for her, make the outing worth it.

We peeked around the corner, seeing the door ajar as we heard a few muffled voices, talking about where they were going to get their first sips of the day. Tugging Rayla behind me, we walked up to the door, and I silently told her to stay there. She nodded, a little too easily for my liking, but I needed to get this done before they tried to come out.

I stared at that slit in the door before I used my magic and shadowed my way into the room. It was only four out of the five of them, but they were all sprawled out on the floor like school girls at a sleepover, that was until Jenny shot up.

“Who the fuck are you? Do you have a death wish?”

I giggled, pulling out a long dagger from my boot as I kept my tone light. “Oh, Hi! My name is Lex Devil, and I will be disposing of your bodies today. Did you want your ashes scattered in the wind or collected and dumped down in the sewer? I heard the sewer is less smelly at this time of year.” Fear crept into the three others’ eyes as soon as I said my name, all of them taking a step back into a fighting stance.

Jenny glared at me as she stood straighter. “We don’t take orders from the Syndicate. With the old men gone, and the head turning into a weak little pregnant bitch, we decided to go our own way. The smarter way.” I heard the door creek open, and I almost whined.

“I am *not* weak, you idiot! Get your facts straight.” Her gun popped off, her bullet hitting Jenny in the arm, who jerked at the impact.

“You cunt! Did that baby take all your brain cells or can you not shoot straight? I won’t die from a shot to the arm,” Jenny taunted, but Rayla only smiled.

“You’re right. You won’t.” Rayla leaned against the doorway. “But the magic bullet that is now traveling around in your body is going to find its target and explode.” She chuckled. “I’ll give you one guess as to what that target is.”

Jenny’s eyes widened, her mouth opening just as her chest exploded, chunks flying everywhere around the room. I moved my body in front of Rayla, keeping her clean from all the mess as she doubled over and laughed. “Too late!”

The others burst into action, two of them charging at me to get to the door, which I quickly shadowed behind one, stabbing them in the heart with my blade as I grabbed the collar of the other, shoving the dead and alive bodies together on the floor.

One of the vampires was trying to be smart, trying to escape through the ceiling tiles, but just as their feet kicked up, I grabbed their ankles and yanked them back down, crashing them into the other vampire that was trying to get up.

“Get ‘em, my sexy stalker! Show them who the Devil’s are!” My veins surged at my mates’ praise, and I went for the chest of the vampire closest to me. Grabbing a hold of their squishy, slimy organ, I ripped it out and threw it on the floor, the vampire dropping instantly.

Just then, I heard a shot, turned around just in time to see the other vampire get sliced in half long ways, effectively getting the heart in the process, as the body pieces dropped to the side. I glared over my shoulder at Rayla, whose tongue was in her cheek.

“Oops. I didn’t mean to use the magic circle like that.” Then her eyes widened and her hand flew to her stomach. “Oh! Oh, my god.”

Oh, no. What happened? What did I do? My whole being in a tizzy, thinking horrible thoughts as I rushed towards her. “What’s wrong? Is it the baby? Did I hurt it?”

Rayla looked up at me, a smile splashed across her face as she shook her head vigorously. “No. No, Lex. Everything is okay.” My body sagged, but my heart was still thumping like a jack rabbit. “The baby kicked. I could feel it. It was like a flutter in my stomach.”

“What?!” My hands reached for her belly before she finished her sentence, feeling on her stomach, wanting to experience what she was experiencing.

She laughed. “The doctor said I would start feeling the baby moving more, but I didn’t know it would feel like this.”

I knelt before her, putting my cheek to her tummy. “I can’t feel anything!” The panic I felt from before bled out of my voice now.

“No, silly. It’s just the beginning movements. Only able to be felt internally. We still have a few weeks to go before you guys can feel the kicks on the outside.” I looked up at her, my lip out as I pouted, and she ran her fingers through my hair.

This was one of those perfect moments when she looked down at me with so much love, so much happiness that I wanted to magic us in this moment and stay this way forever, but of course, someone had to ruin it.

“Don’t fucking move, or I’ll slit her throat.”

I was so caught up in our little bubble that I forgot about the fifth vampire, and now, that fucker had a knife to my mate’s throat. Fuck!

Anger, hate, frustration, and pain surged from me, the ink that swirled around my arms moved off me and slithered onto this vampire, going up his nose, sinking into his skin as the inky poison went straight to his heart. His eyes bugged out as the veins around his face went black, and he gasped out his last breath. The knife fell to the floor as the body fell backwards.

Rayla was still looking at me lovingly, full of trust that I would take care of her. That was the best feeling in the world. That and having her cum all over my tongue and cock. That was also amazing. Oh! And my blood staining her lips, can’t forget that.

Her eyes flew open, and she exclaimed, “It happened again!” She looked at the room full of dead vampires and behind her at the body of the last one. “I think the baby likes the violence.”

I kissed her belly as I cooed, rubbing my cheek against her, hoping the baby felt their papa. “Of course, they do. It’s our kid.”

CHAPTER 5



“YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY GLOWING, my sunshine.” Ternin looped his free arm into Rayla’s as the three of us walked out of The Parlor, our favorite ice cream shop.

Ray scrunched up her face, her spoon was in her mouth, and it made her look just like she had when we were kids. My heart fluttered the same way it did all those years ago, the only difference was I didn’t have to hide it, didn’t have to feel shame. I could love her openly and to my heart’s content.

“That’s sweet, Dad, but I feel like a whale, bumping into everything,” she huffed, just getting started. “I’m always tired because this baby keeps me up *just* when I start to fall asleep, certain smells still make me puke, and this kid acts like blood just comes out of faucets.” She leaned over and whispered to Ternin, “I’m starting to feel bad for the guys, like, I’m draining them dry even though we keep a rotation, and they still won’t let me drink others’ blood.”

“You know I can hear you,” I grumbled before I took another bite of my double strawberry ice cream cone. I needed the sugar bump since I just fed Ray. She wasn’t wrong when she said this baby required a lot from all of us already.

Ternin patted her arm and gave me a sympathetic glance. “It’s all part of the process. You didn’t think that making another

supe was going to be easy, now, did you? Plus, it's not like you'll kill the boys. They're fine. Don't worry about *them*."

Rolling my eyes, I steered them toward the car. Ternin will always be Ternin. Rayla first, the rest of the world second, and I was sure once this baby came, it would be first, which I think gave me solace. Having the most powerful beings in each species as their grandfathers was a great start at being protected.

That was all I thought about these days ... how to protect the baby and Rayla.

I knew Rayla was a big girl. I knew better than most that she could take care of herself, but I'd been training all my life to be at her side, to be her sword and shield. It was difficult to split up my protection between her and our new child, but I also didn't have to do it alone anymore.

I opened the door, motioning for Ternin to get in first as I took Rayla's left hand and rubbed my thumb over the five thin, diamond-studded rings that stacked on her finger. Each band was circled by several little diamonds that made up one carat. Each ring had different color diamonds representing each of our commitments to her. Pink for Avery, black for Lex, red for Ax, gray for Falcon, and purple for me. We noticed that she would stack them differently every day, then smile at us and wink. It drove us crazy to not know what that meant, each of us having our own theories, but I was okay with waiting to figure it out. We had all the time in the world.

Lifting her hand, I turned it around and kissed her pulse, swiping my tongue out just to hear her light gasp. It was one of the best sounds in the world, hearing out loud how my touch affected her. "Your father is right, don't worry about us. We can handle it. We can handle anything for you two."

She gave me one of her melty, sweet smiles, eyes glossing over as she squeezed my hand. "I love you, Cosmo Desmond."

My chest tightened as my pulse quickened. I loved hearing her say that. To profess her feelings out loud. I opened my mouth

to respond when a droll voice came from the car. “All right, you love birds. Let’s get going.”

She yanked me by my neck, surprising me as she pressed her lips to mine and let go far too fast. “All right. All right.” She handed her almost gone cup to her father as she climbed in. “I thought you all wanted to spend time with your kids.” Letting her go, I jogged around the front of the car to the driver’s seat and motioned for Rayla to put on her seatbelt. She snarled at me but complied, so I mouthed *good girl*, and she smirked.

Ternin’s eyes were glued to his phone before his jaw ticked, and he growled at the phone. “We did, at least that was the idea, but now Syris keeps blowing up my phone with texts about...” his eyes shifted like he forgot who he was talking to.

Rayla perked up. “About what?”

He laughed it off, obviously being sneaky about something. “Oh, you know him, he just gets a thought in his bone head and runs with it. That’s why I need to go home, to stop those bone-headed thoughts before they sprout and make a skeleton.”

“Do skeletons sprout from bones? Do they need to be watered?” Ray asked before she broke down and laughed.

Ternin looked at her seriously. “Oh, yes, they do. But you don’t water them, you give them a blood sacrifice, and then-” He kept going as I pulled onto the street, and I tuned out his nonsense. Rayla and him could talk about crazy things all day together, keeping the joke running until one of them broke. It was annoying growing up like that but still interesting to see how imaginative their minds could be.

A part of me wanted my child to have the Desmonds smarts and tenacity, and other times, I looked at them and wondered if I could handle another one of them in this world. The only saving grace was it would only be half, so hopefully the other half will balance them out.

For this first baby, we decided that we wouldn’t get it DNA tested until after it was born. We all agreed to have the first one be a mystery, then we would need to figure out who was

going to be next and so on to ensure that each line had a child, even if we were all going to be their fathers. If it was just us, I bet we would all just see what happened each time, but we were bound by the rules for the Syndicate.

Making and growing the baby seemed straightforward, my role made very clear; protect and serve Rayla to the best of my ability. If she wanted something, I got it. Needed emotional support, I was here for her a hundred percent. She was the one taking the reins, and I was the one to make sure it all ran smoothly, business as usual. It was after the baby came that made me nervous.

“Oooh, oh! Pull over. Pull over. I’m craving something salty. Lets get some fries and blood sauce!” Rayla pointed to one of the mom and pop eateries that cater to the supernatural community.

I swerved just in time, gritting my teeth as I cut off four lanes of traffic to turn down the street I needed to. My eyes glared at the other drivers through the rearview mirror, but Rayla’s eyes were already glued to the food stall, salivating at the thought of the salty potatoes. I chuckled to myself, thinking that while Rayla has always enjoyed food mixed in with her blood, she was ravenous for it now, eating anything she could get her bloody fingers on. It was adorable.

Parking in the sections next to the stall, I got out and opened Rayla’s door, helping her out of the car. Ternin stuck out his hand, and I smirked, turning to follow Rayla. “Damn insolent boy! Is that any way to treat your father!”

“Father-in-law,” I corrected him. I could hear his grumblings behind me as he got out and slammed the car door.

“I raised the damn boy. Even if he’s mates with my daughter, I should be getting extra good treatment. I’m a dad and father-in-law to that damn boy!”

“Don’t worry about him. He’s just jealous that he now has three others, his close buddies at that, who he has to battle for the attention of this little one.” Rayla patted her belly, smiling up at me with a happy, lazy smile I have yet to get used to.

It disarms me, seeing her like this. Blood thirsty Rayla, I got that. Pissed off Rayla, knew how to handle that. Horny Rayla, I would give her anything and everything she needed, but this at ease, happy Rayla, she stunned me. Even with all her complaining about her body and what it was going through, she still had this calmness I was not used to. Just when I thought I knew everything about my little Ray, I realized I was in for a surprise.

“Okay, so you might kill me, but I think I want one of everything on the menu.” She glanced up with a devilish smile and a twinkle in her eye, and I knew I was just going to cave. She had already done this to us a few times, all of us guys agreeing that if she did it again, we would explain that she was never really that hungry and would only eat a fraction, leaving it to the rest of us to finish her food or be wasteful and thrown away.

I nodded, motioning to her to order whatever she wanted, and she skipped to the cashier, proclaiming with wide expressive arms, “I want one of everything!” The cashier glanced at me for a moment, wondering if this lady was just crazy, but I nodded, and they rang her up. She was crazy, but she was my crazy person, so I would take responsibility.

Ternin popped up next to me, gazing at Rayla with a soft smile. “She reminds me of her mother when she was pregnant. Always complaining and always hungry. Makes me think of the good old days when she was just a baby. Savor those moments because once they’re gone, they’re gone forever.” His wistful expression grew painful for a moment before it cleared up when Rayla made her way over to us with something already in hand.

“So they said that it would take them about twenty minutes. When I told them I needed something now, they handed me these.” In her hands were the fries we originally came here for, covered in cheese and blood. She hesitated before she motioned them to both of us to share, but we both shook our heads, and her smile grew as she dug in. Greedy little mate.

Ternin’s phone beeped again, his eyes pinching as his hand clutched the phone, and he huffed under his breath, “Idiots.

Can't get anything right." He quickly shoved his phone in his pocket. "I need to head back to the house. Syris is causing all sorts of havoc."

Rayla brows furrowed. "Wait, do you need us to come? I can send someone else to pick up this food."

"No. No. No. Don't you worry about a thing, my sunshine. Daddy is just going to put a hurtin' on one of your father-in-laws, but you have two others, so I don't think you will mind, right?" He didn't wait for a response. "I'll just go on foot. See you back at the compound." He was a whirlwind as he kissed her cheek, patted my head, and then took off. Something was going on.

"Do we have to worry about that?" Rayla asked as she watched where he disappeared from, still snacking on her fries.

"No." I hesitated before shaking my head. "They have the others there with them. They really couldn't get into much trouble."

"Right. Right." She mumbled around a mouthful of fries as she still watched the sidewalk like her father was going to pop back over and say just kidding.

I circled my arms around her back, circling her belly as I gave her a few kisses on her shoulder before resting my head there. "They're big boys. They can handle the dads without you."

She pulled away, quickly circled around, and shoved her head into my chest as her free hand clutched at my shirt. "We're going to be okay, right? Tell me that everything is going to be fine."

I grabbed her shoulders, meaning to face her, but she wouldn't budge. She suddenly opened her side of the bond, and her emotions rapidly flew into me. Her worries about the baby being healthy and labor going smoothly. Her concern that everything in our lives will change, and we will all start to be different with each other. Stressing about how to be a good mom when she barely remembered hers. Her anxiety about raising a happy child in our lifestyle. Her fear that once we

find out whose child it was, the others would resent her, resent the baby.

All of that flooded me, choked me with her unease, making any words of comfort I had stick in my throat. My only option was to show her, and I gripped on to her tighter, letting her know physically that I was not going anywhere. That seemed to help, her overpowering emotions eased, and I was able to spit out what I wanted to say.

“Thank you for sharing that with me. I know that’s not easy for you.” Her grip tightened, her body shaking as she looked up at me, and tears flooded her eyes.

That one look shattered me into pieces. Rayla hardly ever cried, and if she did, it was mainly in frustration, but this was desperation. I cupped her face gently, the water that filled those beautiful rose gold eyes spilled over, and I gently kissed the tears away.

“Everything will be fine. We’ll make sure of it. You are going to be an amazing mother because if you care this much now, just imagine how much you will care when this baby,” I rested my hand on her stomach, “comes out.” I gave her a gentle, soft kiss on her lips. “As for our lifestyle ... well, we all turned out fine, and we only had one of those insane fuckers each watching over us. This baby is not only going to have the most amazing mother but five protective fathers and four psycho grandfathers. All of that love and support has to mean they’re going to be a little spoiled shit.”

She puffed out a shaky laugh, her eyes clearing as I felt her worries start to evaporate. “As for the rest of us. I shouldn’t speak for the others, but I can confidently say that we all love you beyond what that word means, and this baby is not going to change that love, only strengthen it.”

She opened her mouth to argue, but I cut her off with a kiss, resting my head on hers as I breathed out against her lips, “And just because you like to prepare for the worst case scenario, I would be so incredibly lucky if any of those men bowed out, and I could have you and our child to myself ...

but I'm very confident that I'm not that lucky." She slapped my chest, laughing again as she half-heartedly glared at me.

"And I think those other bastards think just like me about the situation so ... I don't think you have anything to worry about." She sighed into me, hugging me as she balanced the fries in one hand because, God forbid, she let those go.

"Thank you, Cosy." She let happiness and love fill the bond, and I sighed back into her, both of us basking in our loving embrace.

"Oh!" Rayla jerked, placing her hand on her belly, and I looked down at her in concern.

"What's wrong? Is it the baby? Do we need to call the doctor?" I pulled out my phone when she grabbed my free hand and placed it on her belly. It took a few seconds, and I was just about to ask her what she was doing when I felt a bump hit my hand.

My eyes widened as I shoved my phone in my pocket and placed both hands on her belly, staying very still as I waited. She giggled just as I felt another kick and another. My heart froze, and my breath stalled. That was my baby. My baby was kicking me.

"Do you hear your Apá, baby?" Rayla cooed, and I stared at her in wonder. Apá was what we heard all the kids use for "dad" when we lived with Nana.

The baby kicked again, and a pure shot of joy sliced through me. I didn't realize it until she said it, but that was what I wanted to be called. That was how I wanted this baby to know me as. Apá.

"Yes, baby, yes. Apá is here and will take good care of your mommy so you will be born healthy and happy." I felt a rapid succession of kicks, and I smiled, grabbing Rayla and giving her a long, passionate kiss. "I think the baby agrees with me."

She nodded, about to say something, when her eyes widened, and she blurted out, "I have to pee!"

We both looked around for the nearest restroom when we heard a voice, "Rayla! Your order's ready!"

My phone rang, and I saw it was Ternin. I was worried something happened, so I picked it up. His voice was void of emotion, yet held a silent note of urgency. “You guys need to come home.”

I wasn’t able to get a word in when he was followed by a snarky voice in the background, one that could only belong to Syris. “Do they know they are ruining the baby shower I just put together? So help me, if they are having sex, I am going to flip the fuck out!”

It switched back to a calm Ternin, “I would think it would be wise to come home now.”

I looked at Rayla, who was now dancing around looking as she sang, “gotta go, gotta go.” The food stall lady looked at us, holding four big bags of food as she called out for us again. Syris was in the background complaining, “You already made the baby, why the fuck are you all so horny all the time?”

Avery’s voice cut in, “Stop it! You are *not* allowed to comment on our sex life anymore, you hear me!?”

“Oh! Someone’s got a mate and now thinks he’s a big, bad mister man.”

I looked around, being pulled into so many directions at once, and I realized this was my future, forever and ever.

Fucking Hell.

CHAPTER 6



WITH THE DUE DATE only two weeks away, you would think that everything was smooth sailing. Nursery built? Check. Got all the baby crap you need? Check. Do you know where the hospital was, what was the birth plan? Double check.

I even got used to Rayla being pregnant and the swings that come with her body changing. In fact, I felt like it was much easier than what the others thought. She was just like a gremlin. If she's hungry, feed her. If she's stressed, give her a massage. If she's cold, cuddle time. If she's complaining, always agree with her. If she says she doesn't feel like herself or she feels gross, show her how sexy she still looked to me. If she needs blood, I tap on my vein fast and be ready for her to suck you dry. Easy. That was until this last phase.

"I'm ready for this alien to get out of my body! Get out!" Rayla waddled up to the kitchen stool in a huff. She looked like she was going to try and hop up onto the stool, and I just knew that was a bad idea, but what do I do about it? I ran scenarios in my head.

If I ran over to help her, she would bite my head off, claiming she wasn't an invalid. If I let her try it out on her own, she might complain that I didn't help her or worse, she could get

hurt. Knowing I couldn't live with the latter, I set down my coffee and went to help her, and just like I thought, she yelled at me.

“What?! Do you think because I'm a big fat whale of a person that I can't get up on my own stool? Is that what you think of me, Ax?” I immediately shook my head, knowing from recent experience that defending myself was futile and would only cause her to get more argumentative.

“I only wanted to help my beautiful mate who is currently making my child and should be treated like a queen.” She eyed me up and down as I said the words that Avery taught me over and over so I wouldn't forget. For some reason, Avery's smooth-talking ways had the least negative effects, and all of us were asking him for help in this last leg of the pregnancy. Falcon was the one who made us realize that we might as well learn from him now since we have to do this four more times.

With pinched lips, she held out her hand, and I swooped her up in my arms easily, nuzzling her neck. “See. You're not a whale. I couldn't pick up a whale so easily.”

Crossing her arms, she huffed under her breath, “Yeah, and it has nothing to do with your super wolfy strength.” She sat down just as Lisa came back in. Rayla's whole demeanor changed when Lisa was here. “I'm starving, and I think the only thing this baby wants is your special blood jam on sourdough bread.”

Lisa giggled, giving Rayla's hand a loving pat. “Of course, Mrs. Rayla. I'll get that all sliced up, buttered and jammed.” She gave her a wide smile. “And how about some blood sausage to perk those cheeks up.” Rayla licked her lips and nodded, thanking her for taking care of her so well.

I decided keeping my mouth shut was the best option at this point, shoveling the meat and potatoes in my mouth that Lisa just made for me while Rayla sipped her bloody cocoa. Glancing over, I hesitantly scanned her and caught myself staring at her tits. They had gotten huge.

The doc told us that with each species, pregnancy was a little different. With wolves and mages, her body would

instinctively create milk, while with a demon, she would need to ingest some hellfire so the baby could feed off the fumes. With a fairy baby, she would need to have the baby drink from her life force, which was fine since she was a vampire and her life force could regenerate as long as she was ingesting a steady bit of blood. With the little vampire she had now, her body was storing blood so the little sucker would have plenty without leaving her with none.

He also mentioned that we could help with the feedings when she was drained. We decided that when we have a demon, we would all ingest hellfire, having Lex to coach us through the side effects. With a wolf and mage, she could pump, and we could bottle feed. With a vampire and a fairy, they could just take from us like they would take from her. All of us sharing the load so that no one was left half-dead by our little ones.

“You like what you see, big boy.” Her voice snapped me out of my daze, and I realized I was blatantly staring at her tits.

I threw up my hands. “Come on! They’re beautiful!” She’s always had a nice handful, more than enough, but now, they were spilling out of every top she had. I started jerking it everyday, twice a day, unable to keep my libido in check at the sight day in and day out.

She smirked as she sipped her cocoa, and Lisa came around the corner and set her plate in front of her, raised an eyebrow at me, then walked off. *Oh, great. Now Lisa thought I was a pervert.* I looked down again, watching them heave as she breathed, and my mouth salivated. *Maybe I was a pervert.*

Rayla took a few bites before she scrunched up her nose and wiggled off her chair. “I swear, Ax, I want this baby out, and I want it out now. How many weeks am I?”

“Today is thirty-eight.” I remembered because we all decided to stay grounded when it hit thirty eight, but Lex had an emergency yesterday and had to fly out. He promised Rayla it was going to be only twenty-four hours and he would be back, telling the baby that it had lots of time to still grow.

“Uh! I’m over it.” She came up to my side and placed a sweet kiss on my cheek. “I’m going to my check up with the doc,

and then I'm going to find you all afterwards, and we're going to have a pow wow on how to speed this shit along. There has to be something we can do."

The last part was more to herself, but I nodded. That was my job now. Say yes to Rayla, unless it was dangerous. "Okay. Avery is going to do fairy training on Falcon and I, so just come to the training facility when you're ready."

She smiled and nodded, that was until I jerked at her hand suddenly in my lap, rubbing up and down my cock. She whispered, "Thanks for staring at my boobs. It's nice to know you still want me."

I snagged the back of her head, pulling her to me as I stared into her eyes. "I'll always want you, Siren. You're one of the sexiest beings out here in this world. The fact that you are strong enough to carry my child only makes you more irresistible." I meant every damn word.

She shuddered, closing her eyes as she sighed out and gripped my cock at the tip, rubbing her thumb in circles, driving me wild. "I will see you later, my wolf." Then she let go and left in a flash.



Tracks of wetness dripped from my face as I kneeled on the firm mat. Clenching both my fists as my muscles twitched to move, to follow the magical command it was told, but I wouldn't let it.

Ax Rossey. I was Ax Rossey, and this was my body. You will not move. You will obey Ax Rossey.

I repeated my name over and over in my head like Rayla and Cosmo had told me to. Both of them had gone through some basic fairy magic resistance training when they were growing up. Lex, Falcon, and I did not, but with our rise in position, and the fact we're grounded and had the time, we thought we should learn. So that's what Falcon and I were doing, while the stupid demon got out of it with his emergency.

Avery's musical voice sounded right next to my ear, pushing my mind and body to give in to his demands, his wants. *Pick up the dagger, Ax.* I gritted my teeth as my fingers twitched toward the blade right in front of me. I yanked my arms back, and I heard him on my other side. *Pick it up and stab, Falcon. You know you want to. Slice his throat open and watch him bleed.*

"You ... dirty ... rotten ... bastard," I barely ground the words out as I tensed up, holding my body at bay as best as I could. Whenever he used his powers, he was particularly vengeful and nasty. He was tolerable most of the time, but when he got a taste of his own power, you could feel the wild fairy magic dying for its pound of flesh.

He puffed out a chuckle before moving next to Falcon, who was looking just as bad as me but staring straight at the wall. *Falcon. Use your fire magic and burn the beast. Crisp him up nice and ashy.* Falcon's finger sparked, my eyes narrowed. Maybe today was the day we would fail.

A single line of crimson spilled from his lips, the drops echoing in the room as Avery continued to probe him to use his magic, but the more he demanded, the more the blood ran until Avery gave up.

"All right, you fucking psycho. You pass the second level. Stop biting your lip. You're making a mess of the floor." Avery tsked as he went to get something to wipe up the blood.

I sagged in relief as Falcon turned his head and smiled at me. His lips and teeth stained red, looking like a macabre version of himself. "Pain helps to dull the mind, which in turn makes his magic less effective. I will need to capture this data and analyze it afterwards."

Before I could tell him what a fucking weirdo he was, the doors slammed open, and my siren appeared. She looked around the room until she found us. Her eyes lit up, a mixture of determination and desperation as she marched up to us.

I expected her to say something, to tell us what the doc said or just complain about being pregnant, but she jumped onto Falcon, causing him to fall backwards to break their fall.

With how ferocious she was, I thought she was attacking him, but as soon as I got near enough to pull her off, I could see she was kissing him while licking his mouth like it was the last pudding cup and she had to get every scrap.

Folding my arms, I realized I was slightly jealous. I should've cut myself with my claws ... maybe on my thighs, and she would've attacked me like that. As I began envisioning my little siren's head between my legs, licking up at my inner thigh as my dick grew next to her face, I felt myself harden.

I heard Falcon's sharp intake of breath and looked up to see Rayla biting down on his neck as she rubbed herself against him. His shaky hands running up the sides of her body, the fatigue from earlier hitting him, but the will to keep going was strong.

Crawling up behind her, my blood pumped as my tense muscles ached, but I pressed on. I yanked down her leggings, her pale cheeks exposed as I ran my nose along her inner thigh. She twitched, making a muffled sound at my touch, and I smiled.

"Are you ready to take responsibility for earlier? If you think I wouldn't crave this body because I'm exhausted and spent from the fairy training, you would be wrong. The sight of you on top of Falcon got me going, got me thinking of where I want my dick to be." I pulled her cheeks apart, bent down enough to see her glistening, fleshy entrance. "Yes," I breathed against her, swiping my tongue out for a taste. "This is what I want. I want to make you so wet that when I sink my dick inside of you, you'll only feel the pleasure of me pounding into your tight pussy."

She moaned, breaking off of Falcon's skin as she looked over her shoulder and gave me a sassy grin, one that woke up the competitive side of me. "I bet you can't make it wet enough for two dicks to slip inside, making my pussy so full that my head can't think of anything else but you two."

I chuckled as I unzipped my pants. "You game, Mage?" I called out, half expecting him to bow out, wanting to watch instead, but his eyes shined as they steeled.

“You worry about making her wet enough for us both. I will take care of keeping her attention.” His cold voice rang out just as she bent her head back and cried out to the ceiling. “That’s right, wild one, just pay attention to me and what my fingers are doing to your body, where my mouth is going, and how fast your breathing is picking up.”

It sounded like he had control upstairs, so I continued, swiping my tongue around as I ate up every bit of the wetness that was dripping out of her. Ever since she got pregnant, it had been easier to turn her on, get her drenched, and that only made the wolf in me more excited. I licked my lips as I watched her pussy pulse, clench on to nothing, and my throat ran dry.

I didn’t know what the mage was doing, but I did know that she was climbing that high really fast. Her breathing was choppy, and every other word was a moan. I backed away as I had the better entry point for going second.

I snaked my hands around her ribs, as I pulled her up, popping her tits out of his mouth as I grabbed them and whispering against the side of her neck. “Take her, Mage.” Biting down as she writhed against me.

He slid down his pants, his cock in hand as I positioned her over him, making sure she didn’t have to do any of the work. “Are you ready, Siren?” I grabbed her hips, clawing them up before I pushed her down, having her take him inch by inch. They both let out torturous moans, ones that spoke to how good it felt.

“Oh, Rayla, I could never get enough of this, enough of you. Your wildness makes my soul alight with fervor, one I could never put out, even if I wanted to.” Falcon’s breathy admission had her bending over to kiss his lips, but with the state her body was in, he pushed up and met her half way in a passionate response.

She grabbed the side of his face, “I would never let you. I want to burn you up with passion so thoroughly that you don’t ever want to be without my fire again.” She growled against his lips, and my wolf was pounding at the side of my head, telling me to tell her that we wanted that, too.

A purr of a chuckle sounded next to us. “Well, don’t let me disturb you three. I’ll just sit here in my jealousy.” Avery sat down right next to us, watching with delight.

My cock throbbed, needing to be inside of her, and I moved the head of my cock, positioning myself. Before I could do anything, Avery slid his hand down her back and over her ass cheeks. “Now, now, Ax. You know better than that.” He scoffed before saddling up next to me as his fingers began to probe her entrance. “You have to start out soft, stretching her to be able to take you both at the same time.”

Falcon jerked as Rayla cursed, Avery sliding his finger in and out of her along Falcon’s cock. “See. Watch.” My eyes were glued to her pussy as he worked her wetness around his finger until he had enough room for the second. He watched her, mimicking her as she opened her mouth for a silent scream. “Yes, my fierce girl. You like that. You like it when you have more. More is always better for you.” Avery huffed out, mumbling praise to her about how beautiful and strong she was. How he couldn’t take his eyes off her face when it was twisted in pleasure.

When she was ready, Avery added a third. Falcon had stilled, getting used to the space adjustments as Rayla began to rock back and forth, fucking herself on Avery’s fingers and Falcon’s dick.

I was at the end of my rope, my claws digging into my own thighs as I tried to wait patiently. I knew Avery was right, but my body needed to be inside her, to feel her tight, wet pussy clench around me.

Avery must’ve sensed it because he cooed in my ear with his magic voice, *Fuck our mate. Make her scream.*

My mind broke as my physical body surged forward, my cock positioned right where his fingers were as he eased them out, running their wetness along my cock as I shoved myself into her. That had her gasping for air, gulping it down as her body trembled at being stretched so far.

A guttural, “Yyyeeesssss,” rang clear. “Gods, fuck me, Ax. Fill me up, and fuck me with Falcon. I want you guys to

fucking rail me.” I didn’t need to be told twice.

Falcon moved first, running his cock along mine as he moved in and out slowly, rubbing his pelvis along her clit as he moved. I took a different approach. I grabbed her hips as anchors and shoved myself inside her over and over. Taking her like it was my last salvation.

I watched Avery snag her chin and swallow down one of her moans as his tongue swiped inside her mouth. He was nipping and licking everything, making a mess out of the kiss, which just made it hotter as we made a mess of her pussy.

She clenched down, gasping for breath when her orgasm crashed into her, grabbing onto Avery and Falcon to make sure she didn’t fall over. I thrust into her, making sure her cum covered our cocks. Falcon grew impatient and started to bounce in and out, both of us chasing that edge she had already fallen over.

Once we did, I growled as Falcon grunted, both of us releasing at the same time, filling her up so full that it leaked out around us. Falcon fell back as I pulled out, settling down on my knees just to catch a breath.

A naked Avery scooped her up in his arms, kissing her all over, and his cock rubbed up against her drenched pussy. “It’s our time, fierce girl.” *Our time?*

I looked at Avery to see him push himself inside of her, balancing her in his arms as he grinned at the door. “Cosy, just in time. I think this pussy has been primed enough for you and I to slip right in. What do you say?”

My eyes traveled to the door to see Cosmo step in, his eyes scolding with a burning lust for our mate. Avery pulled apart her cheeks, angling her so we could all watch as he entered her easily, mine and Falcon’s cum dripping out as she moaned out for more.

Cosmo stomped up, giving Rayla a kiss before anything, resting his head on hers as he whispered, “Is this what you want?”

Rayla smiled a dopy smile as she cupped his cheek and pulled his face towards hers again. “Fuck me, Cosmo.” She breathed against his lips in a sultry voice. “Fuck me so good that I see stars.”

“Anything for you. Everything is for you, my Ray.”

He moved behind her, telling her how much he loved her as he took off his pants and kissed down her back. Wrapping one hand under her arm, he grabbed her tit, flicking his finger against her pebbled nipple as he positioned himself and thrust inside.

She was glorious. My mate. Bouncing between these two men, you would think they were just decorations. Just pieces that were meant to go in the background as you stared at the beauty that was my mate in her throes of passion and lust. She was this ashy-haired, jewel-eyed, goddess, temptress. She would have you craving her over and over again, always wanting more than you can give.

That’s why I called her siren. It was like she was taking my life force bits at a time, and I gladly gave it over to her, just to watch her body sing and hear her moans fill the room. She was a glorious sight, and she was mine. Well, ours.

It didn’t take long for the three of them to cum together. Cosmo and Avery sat down Rayla gently as she leaned back on Cosmo with a euphoric, satisfied expression. Falcon walked over with a wet towel, wiping her up before he took her upstairs to give her the aftercare he truly enjoyed giving.

With the rest of us spent, we barely had time to clean up and get our clothes on when I heard her cry out in shock. Falcon called in panic and that had us all scrambling up the stairs. We first found Falcon, tripping over his own feet as he muttered to himself about getting the room ready, getting her bag, needing blood. Then we found our mate by her dresser, clothes in her hand like she was about to put them on when we saw a wet puddle underneath her.

She looked up, smiling widely with glee as she boasted, “It worked! The doc told me lots of sex would help bring on labor!” She laughed like a loon as my soul left my body and

Falcon's panicked voice making lists in the background started to make sense. *Holy fuck, we're having a baby.*

"Boys," Rayla called out as she put a shirt over her head, "it's time to pack up and head to the hospital, my water broke!"

CHAPTER 7



“YOU ALL DID THIS to me! You all will pay for this when this is all over!”

Maybe threatening my mates was a bad idea, but at the moment a contraction hit, they all looked around at each other like buffoons. Maybe I was getting payback for trying to end this pregnancy as soon as I could.

When the doc told me the list of things that could help speed along labor, I zeroed in on the sex one because I knew I could double down on that. I could have a bunch of sex, have them all stretch me out and make my body bounce, so the baby thought this was a bad home and wanted to get out. Now I was regretting that hasty choice.

Avery kept sending me worried glances, Ax was just stunned, holding up his hands up like he didn't know what to do with them. Cosmo was right by my side, taking the brunt of my anger as I squeezed his arm so hard my nails pierced his skin, but he didn't let out a peep. Falcon was on the goddamn phone because I was screaming about where Lex was a moment ago.

“Here comes another shot.” A sharp pain hit, and I growled at the doctor, who was holding an empty syringe, smiling at me like this was the best day of his life. He would regret that smile when the night was over.

I gritted my teeth together as I seethed at him, “Don’t think that I won’t turn my vengeance out on you just because you’re a doc! If you stick me one more time, I will cut off your dick and balls, stuff them, and then use them as a stress toy!”

He nodded, looking over a chart as he whispered something to the nurse and handed the clipboard to her. “Now, that’s the creative and inventive mom I always knew you could be.” He continued like I didn’t just threaten him, patting my leg like that was comfort. “You know that because you’re in labor that we’ll need to stick you regularly with regenerative blockers so that your body doesn’t repair itself faster than we can get the baby out. Rest assured that all mixed-species mummies have to do one thing or another for a healthy pregnancy, this is just yours.”

I blew a strand of my hair out of my sweaty face as I glared at him. “So, your saying I need to give birth like a fucking human?”

He thought for a second before answering, “Not really. You still have a natural pain tolerance humans don’t have. It’s more like being half ... or maybe two thirds, human.”

I was afraid that my anger was going to take a deadly turn, and I slammed back down onto the pillow. The doc gave me a small, sympathetic look, “You’re only six centimeters dilated. When you are at ten, and the baby is in position, we can start to push.” He nodded to my mates, giving them a sympathetic expression before scooting out the door.

“We?!” I screamed at the closed door. “Who the fuck is “we”?!” I swung my gaze to Falcon and barked out, “Where the fuck is Lex?”

He closed his phone, slipping it into his pocket as he slowly turned towards me, the epitome of calm. “Last I heard, he was on his way.”

A surge of panic filled me. Lex would never do this to me. He would never leave me to have our baby without him. Something must’ve gone wrong.

“Last you heard?” I huffed out, trying to not be mad at the messenger. I needed to think about this like a Syndicate boss, but my brain was going a little off kilter, and my body was starting to tingle with a familiar human-like pain.

“His phone is turned off, and I am not able to get ahold of him.”

Balling my fists, I took a few deep breaths. There was no way that he was dead, I would feel it. I touched my chest right where his bond was, and it was still there, glowing and vibrant. If he wasn't dead, then someone is detaining him. Maybe he had been kidnapped and was being tortured? *Where are you, Lex?*

Avery moved to my other side, sliding his hand into mine. “I'm sure he's on his way here. He wouldn't miss it, no matter what the situation is, he wouldn't miss *this*.” I nodded, my heart heavy, even when I knew his words were true.

A wave of pain I hadn't felt before cascaded down on me, and I clenched up, not able to breath. What the fuck? Why was it so powerful now? Then I remembered the shot the doc gave me, and I realized that was why.

This was horrible! Why would human women go through this?! I'm a tough chick, but this whole thing sucks. Throwing up, being sick at random times, feeling sore, hormones raging, wanting certain foods so bad you're willing to kill someone for it, then taking a bite and feeling full. All of that craziness was just the precipice to having to go through this horrendous experience they call labor.

“It looks like it's a big contraction. Hold our hands and squeeze if it's too much,” Cosmo's calm voice said as he watched the monitor. I was about to yell at him that I could fucking feel that, but instead, my words came out choppy and deep.

“You ... this ... your ... fault. All of ... you ... made me ... like this.” I squeezed down hard on the hands that were holding mine. As soon as the contraction stopped, I could breathe again, and I let go, falling back in the bed.

Avery stepped back as he shook his hand, trying to smile through the pain as he said, “Still got that strength of a vampire.” I grinned at his pain. They should all have to feel fucking something, bastards.

I heard arguing outside the door, and a few escalated voices, before the door opened and in walked my dad and my father-in-laws. “Sunshine! I’m her-”

Syris surged forward as he blurted, “You amazing, wonderful woman! After all of this is over,” he waved his hand at the bed I was currently in, “I want to give you a push gift! Tell me what you want!”

I narrowed my eyes on him, his smiling face falling with each passing second until he turned toward the guys. “It’s called a “push gift”, right? I looked it up on the internet and everything.”

“That’s it! Out. All of you.” Avery stalked up toward his dad, waving him to leave the room.

“See what you did?! You got us kicked out!” My dad screeched out.

“Ya. That’s the only reason we’re being kicked out.” Easton’s monotone sarcastic voice rang and I had to admit, he wasn’t wrong.

My dad turned toward me as my mates were trying to shoo him along. “I didn’t do anything, I should get to stay.”

Cosmo got up without me having to ask. “Nope. All of you. In the sitting area. One of us will let you know when the baby is here.” They boxed out the dads from my view as they shuffled them slowly toward the door.

My dad was not used to not getting his way and continued. “Rayla, these rascals are the ones who did this to you. I think you should kick them out!”

I opened my mouth, but Falcon turned, arms crossed as his voice rang out in cold authority, “We heard you outside arguing with the staff, threatening and bribing them until the doctor came and said you could have five minutes, as long as

you did not aggravate the situation.” He looked down at his watch. “Five minutes is over, and the situation is aggravated.”

“Easton, you better get a rein in your boy,” My dad said, a last ditch effort to stay, and I almost laughed.

Easton rolled his eyes, nodded to Manic, and they both grabbed onto Ternin and Syris. “We’ll be sitting outside. Just let us know when you’re ready. We all want to see our new grandbaby.” I nodded, letting the calm ones of the group know that I agree and we will, just not until everything was cleaned up and ready. Knowing my dad, he would want to be here the whole time, and Syris would be right up my vag, just waiting for the child to pop out. That was some emotional trauma I just didn’t want to deal with.

Ax came to my side, mumbling about how they’re all psychos, then smiled at me and kissed my head. “We’re here for you, Siren. We’re not going anywhere.”

It was sweet, and my heart did melt a bit, until another ripple of pain hit me, and I squeezed down on Ax’s hand as I mashed my teeth together. I could tell this one was a big one.

As soon as it subsided, I let go, and Ax cried out, “Holy fuck, you were not wrong, Avery.” He looked at his hand, cradling it for a second as he whispered more to himself than anyone in the room, “I think she broke a finger.” I was about to yell at him that at least his body would be able to heal it right away, but I couldn’t when I felt another one coming on. *Can’t a girl catch a break here?!*

The contractions started to come on strong and frequent, all four of my mates taking turns holding my hand and letting me hurt them because I confessed it made me feel better. Made it seem like they were in this with me if they hurt, too.

A nurse came in and checked on me, not saying anything when she left, and that was odd. That was until the doctor came rushing in. “All right! Looks like your baby dropped, and you’re ready to start.”

Looking around at my mates, I was panicked because Lex still wasn’t here. He wasn’t fucking here. Water clouded my eyes

as I begged one of them to do something. I wanted all of them here with me. I shook my head, the tears falling from my eyes. I couldn't do this without him.

I mumbled out, tears free flowing like I couldn't stop them if I wanted. "I can't. No. Not yet."

The doctor looked at the guys in concern before clearing his throat. "Rayla, we need to do this now. Your body-"

The door swung open, and a familiar dark head of hair with short horns came barging in. "My rose! Wait for me! I'm here!" The whole room was quiet, other than the beeping of the machines, and a collective sigh came out from my mates. It seems they were just as affected as I was at Lex's absence.

Love, relief, anger, panic, all flooded me. I was sure I looked like a madwoman, hair all a mess and tear tracks down my face, but I didn't care. Lex was finally here.

I chucked my pillow at him. "Where the *fuck* were you?!"

Lex caught the fucking pillow, smiling at me. "I dont think it's the right time for a pillow fight, my rose, but I will do it if you want me to."

I let out an angry, relieved laugh until another contraction hit, and I was unable to speak, only glare at him. Silently, I told myself that I was going to raise hell at him later. Right now, our baby was coming, and I had all my mates with me. Everything was going to be okay.

"All right, Rayla. Are you ready, now? Because you're going to need to push." I gritted down, nodding, as I bellowed out and pushed.



"What do you want to name him?" Cosmo asked as he sat next to me as I cradled our little baby boy.

All I could do was stare at him in awe. I felt like a mess. Exhausted, and in need of a lot of down time, but I couldn't take my eyes off him. He was beautiful. He had a full head of the trademark Desmond ashy white hair. Every once in a

while, he would blink, and you could see a peek of my rose gold eyes, but his face looked just like Cosmo.

“What do you guys think of Calix?” I looked at all my mates, all of them just as enthralled with our little one as I was.

Ax was the first to say his opinion. “I think it’s good. A strong name.”

The rest of them nodded, all of them looking like they wanted a turn to hold him. I guess I should let them. They are the fathers. I leaned over to the side Avery was on. “My arms are getting tired, you want to hold him?”

His eyes lit up, flashing between me and the baby as his hesitant arms reached out. “Sure. I mean...”

I chuckled, holding him out to him. “You won’t break him.” He looked at me like he didn’t believe me, but he took the baby, cradled him like the nurse said.

“Oh, wow. Hey, little Calix. I’m your papa. The cool one. The one that will teach you how to get girls, promise.” All of us smiled or chuckled, all but Ax.

“Yeah, right. He will learn that from his dad, Ax, right, Siren?” He winked at me.

“You want him to fuck strangers?” I laughed, trying to get him to remember how we met.

His nose scrunched as he rubbed the back of his neck, and his cheeks reddened. “All right. We will find you a good girl. One that will be a fit for you.” He looked back at my raised eyebrow and he sent me an air kiss. I decided not to let that little comment bother the bliss we all were in.

Cosmo clutched my hand, letting me lean on him as we watched as they all passed Calix around, telling him things that they would teach him or do for him. It was adorable.

I felt a kiss on my head as Cosmo’s voice whispered along my hair, “You are fucking amazing. Never in this life did I think I would be this happy.” His palm met my cheek as he turned my face and gave me a slow, sensual kiss, one that spoke silent words of devotion, love, loyalty, and respect. It was a kiss to

tell me that he was in love with me, in love with our life and with the family we had created.

I sunk into that kiss, letting it last as long as he would let it because we were all in this happy bubble that I never wanted to end.

We broke away when I heard Lex talking. “And to make it here on time, your daddy had to take over a plane, knock out the pilots, and change the direction of the flight. Landing it myself to get here in time to see you be born and to be here for beautiful mommy.” He looked at me, giving me those dark pools of everlasting love and worship. “Mommy is quite amazing. You have the best mommy in the whole world. You’re so lucky.” I was stunned, but also felt my heart grow at Lex’s words. Not knowing that I desperately wanted to hear that kind of praise.

Our kids will have five amazing and wonderful dad’s, but they were only getting one mom. What if I fucked up? What if I wasn’t good enough? Being the mom was all on my shoulders and it was a little daunting.

Falcon rolled his eyes. “Yes, let’s not encourage our child to steal a plane mid-flight. Do you even know how to fly a plane?”

Lex swung around with Calix in his arms and faced Falcon. “Is it really stealing if I didn’t keep it? Also, you act like it’s hard to do. Just, you know ... fly it, and you know ... land it. Easy.” He shrugged at the rest of us while we all stared at him with wide eyes and dropped mouths.

Well, that was Lex. Always our wild card. I wonder if he will tamper the crazy down when we have all the kids. *Kids. Plural.*

I looked around at my mates, all their smiling faces, and I realized that even with how horrible the whole pregnancy thing was, I was able to get through it because of these five men. These men that will never leave my side. The fathers of my child and soon-to-be children.

We would be okay. I could do this another four times if I could see all of their faces light up like this. To see their child and hold them in their arms. My eyes started to water again. Before I could say some sappy shit, the door burst open, Syris clutching the door frame as his body was visibly shaking.

“I think I have held myself *long enough*. I let you have your *private labor*. Stayed in my seat as the doctors went in, and heard you screaming obscenities to the boys. I even *sat on my hands* when I heard my glorious grandchild’s cries of being born. I *demand* that I get my baby sniffing and holding time, and I want it now!”

I saw all the dad’s pushing at Syris’s back, trying to get in to see the baby, and I laughed. “Yes. Yes. Come in. Come meet your grandson, Calix.”

My dad and Syris cried out in excitement, both of them immediately fighting over who would be the first to hold him. Easton was the dark horse in the game that snuck in between the fighting pair and snatched him up, cooing about how he was such a smart boy. Manic rumbled out how he was next after Easton. My dad and Syris were fuming with rage.

At once, I felt all of my mate’s hands on me, grabbing my hand, legs, ankles, all of them squeezing me, and I knew that this was only the start of something amazing. Something that we would build to be remarkable. The Syndicate, this family, was going to rule the world.

CHAPTER 8



Ten years later....

SHIT. I REALLY MADE a mess with that last fucker . I looked at my blood-covered hands and shirt as I turned the wheel onto our compound. After we had Aniyah, my father-in-laws all petitioned us to move from Vegas into their safer locations. Even Ternin kept his mouth shut about it, but in the end, we all decided to stay in Vegas.

We were the heads and needed to keep our tabs on what's going on in our biggest money-making location. We all still traveled around to make sure our hubs were working correctly, sometimes to clean out management that was not working, but we kept that on rotation. Only one of us traveled out of the city at a time. We always wanted to get back home as fast as possible.

Turning to the left, I slid the car to the garage as quietly as possible. *Falcon was going to kill me.*

He had recently souped up a Bugatti Chiron super car for us to share, trying to test out all the features, but his one rule was no blood on the leather seats. I got out, looked down, and I saw the whole driver's seat covered in red. Oops. He was going to be pissed about that.

I unbuttoned my shirt, kicked off my shoes, and took off my pants, heading to the single use shower that was off to the side of the garage. Riot, our second youngest, was abnormally into my line of work at a young age. At two years old, she asked me where the blood on my clothes came from. I said Daddy was doing his job and taking out some trash people. I thought I was clever, evading the question, but she saw right through me and asked if it felt good to get rid of these trash people.

She surprised the shit out of me, so I evaded the question and talked it over with Rayla and the guys. We decided to wait and see how she reacted next time before doing anything drastic. She could just be a naturally curious girl, or you know, the next spawn of Satan. It was a toss up.

The next time I came home with blood spatter on my coat, she used her mage air magic to grab it and began examining the blood. After we saw her lick it and ask me what kind of supe it was, we decided that Daddy Lex needed to come home cleaned up, at least until she was old enough to shadow me. She needed training for all that first, so it was a bit away, but I had a feeling that I already knew who was going to be head of the Devil clan when the time came.

After scrubbing myself clean, and stuffing the dirty clothes in the hamper, grabbing new comfy ones that Rayla left out for me, I put my shoes back on and went into the house. "Daddy's home!" I called out just as a small werewolf scampered past me, heading for the foyer.

"Damn it, Nova! You need to learn how to control those urges. I'm just trying to help you!" Ax came lumbering after our little wolf with Manic trailing behind him with a bag of chips in hand as he smiled wide, enjoying the scene.

Ax slowed down as he gave me a nod and a pat on my arm. "Glad you're home. Now, go help with this madhouse!" He turned his head behind him, glaring at his father. "And you! You find this fucking funny?"

Manic gave a low, deep chuckle. "Yes. Yes, I do. Now, go get her before she pees on the new rug I just gave you."

Ax blew out an exhausted breath, grumbling about his damn daughter being more of a handful than he was as he ran off after her. Nova was our seven-year-old and the third born. She was a werewolf and had the temperament of her bio dad, but the gorgeous ashy hair and eyes like pink jewels were all her beautiful mother. They were all like that, in fact.

We had one of each, a vampire, demon, werewolf, mage, and fairy. All of them with their father's species' natural traits and magic, but on the outside, all of them had the Desmond moon-kissed ashy hair and sparkling rose gold eyes. Just looking at them, you would know that Rayla was their mother. Our children were absolutely stunning.

I followed behind Manic until we got to the kitchen and peeled off to get myself a drink. I was parched from all that killing, and nothing beat a good glass of hellfire water to feel refreshed. It was the good stuff because it was brought up straight from Hell, no fake stuff crossed our threshold.

Opening the fridge, I grabbed the can and turned around in time to see Aniyah, our youngest at four years old, with pigtails riding up top Ternin's shoulders, her wings flapping furiously as she gripped his hair and giggled. "Tata! Go faster, go faster!" Her natural fairy charisma was infectious, and her soft features were a blend of both Avery and Rayla.

Ternin smiled up at her, even though her grip was so tight I could see his scalp, wasn't noticing anything but her beautiful smile. That guy was a sucker for any of his grandkids. "You want speed, my little darling, then I will give it to you!"

He reared up his leg, acting like he was about to zoom off, when I called out, leaning on the counter, "Did you forget Mommy's rule?"

Aniyah turned towards me, mouth and eyes wide open as she looked at me with awe and love. Her hands flew up into the air, Ternin's hand grabbing her so she wouldn't fall, as she screamed out, "Daddy! Daddy's home!"

Ternin grumbled as he picked her up and put her down, and she ran for me, grabbing onto me so hard that I felt my heart beat out of my chest. I would do anything for this girl,

anything for any of my children. I never thought I could love anyone as much as I loved Rayla, but these kids were right up there. It was a different kind of love with Rayla, more of an unhealthy obsession and deep need to be with her, to have her, to be consumed by her, but the love I felt for our children was pure and everlasting.

I hugged her back just as hard and she sighed into me. “I love you, Daddy.” I choked up right then and there, never wanting her to grow up.

“I love you so much, my little love.”

She pulled away, smiling sweetly at me as she placed her hand on my cheek, staring up at me with the wide innocent eyes. “So, how about we just don’t tell Mommy about going fast with Tata, kay?”

Ternin laughed hard as he scooped her up, placing her on his shoulders like he knew I would crumble, and I did. I so did. That girl knew how to play us in the worst way, and she was only four. God help the man she ends up with.

Ternin cooed, “You’re so smart, little darling. You will be able to convince anyone to fall on a sword for you. That’s a valuable tool.”

She giggled again, hugging his head with her tiny arms, laying her cheek on his head as she grinned at me with that evil little grin. “Oh, Tata, you’re my favorite. I would never let you fall on a sword.” Ternin placed his hand on his chest, gasping for air, enjoying his small moment of delight before he told her to hold on and zoomed off.

I shook my head just as I heard the front door slam shut. “Calix, Ezra! You get down here right now!” Oh, shit, that was the scary mommy voice, I wonder what they did.

Opening the door to the foyer, I saw my gorgeous wife and mate standing at the bottom of the stairs, arms crossed as she tapped her foot in frustration with her trusted knight on one side and her magic man on the other. It must’ve been a school issue, since she took the two that would keep a calm, level head and make sure she didn’t burn the place down.

Cosmo nodded to me first, then she turned, and her face instantly changed from blazing anger to excited and happy. Falcon's monotonous voice lifted to me first, "You just missed out on parent teacher night. Lucky."

She quickly appeared by my side, throwing her arms around me as she hugged me tight. I sniffed her neck, nuzzling her as I let myself sink into her presence. This was where home was. This was what I was dying to get back to. That sweet floral scent filled my lungs, and I felt like I could fly. "I missed you," I nuzzled further, letting my hands drift towards the sculpted ass that called to me.

"Mmm, me, too," she muttered, digging her nails into my back to bring me closer, to keep me with her. I loved it.

"Eww, Mom, gross! Don't do that in front of us?" Calix complained from the stairs, his eyes narrowed on us just like Cosmo. It was a little freaky.

He was ten now, just starting to break out in his own skin, which meant he was experimenting with his "look" and had this weird spiky hairdo we were all hoping he would grow out of. I felt Rayla's muscles tense up. She was gearing herself back up again for whatever she came in yelling about.

My rose swirled around, finger out, and pointed at Calix as she stomped her way over to him. "Don't worry about what I do with your fathers. You don't get a say, young man." Erza, our second oldest, marched her way down the stairs, looking at all of us like we were disrupting her life for something trivial. She was only nine, but she already commanded a room like a boss, just like her mother. She learned how to use her demon magic early, and then took an interest in how her mom worked and what the Desmond clan did. I would bet a million bucks that she was going to take the head seat for the Syndicate and would have the world under her thumb.

"Do you know why I am upset with both of you right now?" Rayla asked, glaring at both of them as they stood side by side. Even though there was a year difference, they were both similar in height, but Calix had the pale complexion of a vampire, while Ezra had my olive tones.

Neither of them went to speak, both of them looking at each other like they could talk to each other in their minds. When Ezra gave a nod, and Calix twitched his fingers, I couldn't help but wonder if they could actually read each other's minds. That would be so cool and useful.

"No, none of that shit. Answer me. Do you know why I'm upset?" When they still didn't say anything, standing there with a straight face, I was a little proud of the troublemakers. At least we didn't raise snitches. Rayla seethed through clenched teeth, "Do you know why I was called to the principal's office today? Why I had to sit down and be told that both of my kids were about to be kicked out for starting a fight that had a few kids go to the hospital?!"

"We didn't start shi-" Ezra elbowed Calix, who hissed at her, but she kept her eyes on her mom, knowing she was the biggest threat in the room and sizing her up.

Cosmo stepped forward. "I think what your mother is trying to ask is-"

"How the fuck could my children, *my children*, get caught for something like that! I thought we'd taught you better than that!" Rayla's fiery venom whipped out, and Cosmo hung his head for a second, sighing. Yep, my rose was more pissed that our kids got caught than that they caused an actual fight.

Right then, Easton walked into the room, but no one was paying attention because the focus was on the two kids on the stairs. He mouthed 'what is going on?' I pointed to the kids and sliced a finger below my neck, symbolizing them being in trouble.

"Don't worry, Mom, we're handling it," Ezra said with a straight face, which cooled down her mother's anger, but that simply turned it into the ice wall of the Syndicate boss. To me, that was the scarier of the two. Give me a raged-out, crazy Rayla any day of the week versus the calm logical one. That one did shit just to see you squirm.

"You're handling it, huh? Did you hear our daughter?" She looked over at Cosmo, Falcon, and I, all of us backing Rayla with stone-cold faces. She turned back to Ezra. "So, what is

this grand plan of yours? How are you going to smooth this over and make sure this never happens again?”

Ezra came down a step, getting just that much closer to Rayla as she smirked. “Oh, we have plans. They thought they could jump Calix in the back of the bleachers, but he took out two of their guys before I even got there.” Ezra looked back at her brother, who moved to stand next to her, giving each other a fist bump in solidarity. I swear, this was an adorable moment with our little gangsters. “We’re going to take out all of their guys, sending out a big message to all of them to not mess with us, and we won’t have to lift a finger.”

Ezra nodded to Calix, who flicked his wrist, and out came a mechanical spider. Rayla bent down and picked it up, examining it for a second before handing it over to Falcon.

Falcon analyzed it at record speed. “Looks like its legs can also turn into knives,” he lifted one leg and sniffed, “which are poisons. Not lethal.”

Easton took that moment to pipe up, beaming, “I taught him that.”

Falcon ignored his father and examined the head of the spider. “Eight high-tech lenses with scopes and recording features,” he turned it around, “with a chamber for some kind of gas?”

“Pass out gas mixed with a short-term memory loss compound. It makes for a better getaway if they can’t remember you,” Calix boasted before he whistled sharply, and the spider immediately crawled back over to him, crawling up his arm and settling into the back of his watch. While he was Cosmo’s kid in DNA, he took after Falcon in smarts and ingenuity. That kid was all brains and looks.

“Impressive,” Falcon said, his face still blank, but you could see in his eyes all the applications he was thinking of for that little invention. Calix blushed at the compliment, always excited when Father Falcon was proud.

“And the plan?” Rayla asked. I could see her lips twitch, liking the spider idea but wanting to see it all the way through first. “How are they going to know that they should never mess with

you again? Never mess with the Syndicate again?” Ezra’s slow grin reminded me of me, and I knew that little devil had something up her sleeve.

“Oh, that will be easy. We’ll offer to meet up with them for a truce, making them think we’re weak. When they make their way over to the truce, we will already have a bunch of these guys ready at all entrances, and as they are just about to enter, we strike. Making sure they can see our faces as they are taken down one by one, making it known that they can’t touch us if we deem it so.”

She crossed her arms and cocked out her chin. “They can’t place any blame on us because we’ll have them self-destruct before anything happens. No one will be able to say we had anything to do with it.”

Suddenly, Ezra’s face changed, looking panicked and scared. “We just wanted to make up with them, to make sure no one else got hurt again. We have no idea who did that horrible, awful thing to those boys. They didn’t deserve that.” Then her lips curved up as she puffed out a laugh, proving her acting abilities. That girl was dangerous in the best of ways. I couldn’t have been a prouder dad. *What did that say about me?*

Rayla smirked before she turned to Falcon, who gave a nod, his blessing for the plan. Then she turned to Cosmo. He ran his hand through his hair, looking between the two of them. “As long as you have each other’s backs if this goes sideways, I’m fine with it.”

My rose glanced back at me, and I put my hands up. “You know I’m all for the blood and bone-breaking stuff, but this works, too. It seems like a clean job. No blow back.”

Rayla nodded, turning back to the kids. “Fine. You have our blessing, since we had to clean up your mess, this time, but as punishment ... you will need to clean up the training room every day after school for a month, and I want it fucking spotless, you hear me?”

Ezra opened her mouth to argue, but this time, Calix bumped her shoulder, giving his head a little shake. “That sounds fair,

Mom. We're sorry that you had to get involved." I smiled at the kid. Like I said, he was the intelligent one.

Rayla's body relaxed instantly, stepping toward them as she put one palm on each of their cheeks. "I don't mind getting involved when you need me to. We'll always be here for you. We are here to make sure you grow up to be strong, resilient individuals that could eventually take over the family business." She bent and kissed each of them on the foreheads. "But you are my children first, I would burn that whole school down if I thought you would actually get hurt."

Cosmo coughed. "She almost decapitated your principle."

Both kids looked at her, and she shrugged, letting them go. "What?! He said my kids were troublemakers and they shouldn't be allowed in polite society. Just look at them?!" Both kids were standing tall with their hands behind their backs. "He was just lucky I didn't have you guys hold him down as I peeled off each nail one by one and wore them as a bloody necklace."

Calix and Ezra chuckled, giving their mom a hug. I wanted to go in for a hug cuddle, but I felt a pair of eyes on me. I looked all around but didn't see anyone. I let my shadows go, searching around until I found the little peeper.

Slinking into the shadows, following the line that went to the dark corner in the room, I quietly materialized. I wanted to yell, "Got ya," but before I could, she beat me to it.

"When did you realize I was watching you?" Riot asked, a small notebook in hand as she was taking notes and keeping her eyes on the family. Her serious focus reminded me of Falcon when he was in the lab. While she was a magical prodigy like her father, having power over three elements, air, fire and spirit, that was where the similarities ended.

I gave her an honest answer, curious to find out what she was doing. "Only a few seconds ago ... why?"

She immediately scribbled down into her small notebook, using her air magic to flip the page. "I've been trying different

spying techniques to find out which one is the most noticed. I'm finding it also depending's on the species and age."

What she was doing sounded very familiar, so I asked her, "Why are you stalking your family?"

She slowly turned towards me, her face dead serious as she replied, "I need to know their weaknesses if I'm going to keep them safe. Family is everything, so it must be protected, right?"

I closed my eyes for a second, realizing that I understood my mage daughter better than anyone else. Placing my hand on her shoulder, I nodded, knowing exactly where she was coming from. "You know what, you're right. Just like you have to know your enemy, you need to know your allies just as well."

Deciding to help her out, I whispered, "Did you know your father has a nervous twitch when he is talking about something he isn't a hundred percent sure of?" She shook her head and flipped to another page, telling me to go on.

I thought for a second. "Your Apá always orders mint chocolate ice cream, but his real favorite is strawberry."

Her eyes widened. "Then why does he get it?"

Smirking, I leaned against the wall and crossed my arms. "Because your mother's second favorite is mint chocolate, and he doesn't want her to miss out on it."

She wrote that down in her notebook, muttering to herself, "You guys are head over heels for Mommy. She's your weakness."

She was partially correct, but I had to correct her. "Maybe, but she's so strong that she lends us her strength. She gives us the will and power to go through hard stuff and make it out the other end all right. That's a powerful kind of love. Something you can't take away easily."

Writing down the last thing in her notebook, she hugged my leg. "Soul mates. I think that's what they call soul mates, Daddy. And you're lucky to have found yours." I bent over, hugging her as best as I could. Even with her analyzing,

stalking, and figuring out the best information to have, she had the softest heart of all five, deep, deep down. Once you got there, she was just a mush ball looking for a fairytale.

“Daddy?”

I kept my eyes closed as I was still hugging her, never wanting to let go. “Yes, sweetheart?”

“Next time, clean your shoes better. You missed a spot with the werewolf blood on it.” I looked down, and sure enough, there was one splatter of blood. Shit. Can’t get nothing past her.

“Don’t tell Mommy.” I really didn’t want to hear another lecture about what was appropriate for this stage of life for our kids. We all agreed to give our children a time of innocence. A time where they could just be kids. Once they turned thirteen, they would start training and shadowing each of us to find out where they fit the best.

She smirked as her cheeks flushed. “Okay. Promise.” I kissed her head, knowing that she had a healthy dose of crazy, but she was smart about it, so she would be just fine. Just adding another loonie one in the bunch. Speaking as one of those loonies, I feel like we have more fun, sooooo... it’s fine.

A crash sounded upstairs, followed by Ax bellowing, “Nova! Did you just piss and shit in my new shoes?!”

All I heard were nails flying across the marble at her quick escape, and she ran down the stairs as fast as her paws could take her. His lumbering feet sounded after her, and knowing Ax, he would catch her soon, so she better be prepared.

Just as she hit the last step, Manic scooped up the pup and cradled her into his arms. “I’ll save you, little one,” he whispered. She settled in his arms just as Ax appeared at the top of the stairs. Manic turned away slowly, pretending to be very interested in a painting on the wall, trying to keep Nova hidden.

Ax passed Manic, looking around quickly as he ran into the other wing looking for her. Ax was trying to potty train Nova,

but it was proving to be more difficult than he originally thought.

Manic was shaking in laughter as he let Nova go, telling her to tear up his bedding next. Her tongue rolled out as she took off running in that direction.

At the same time, Avery came in the door just as Syris walked in with Aniyah on his shoulders but with her mouth covered in chocolate.

“Aniyah! Where did you get that candy?!” Rayla gasped. I don’t know if it’s because Rayla was worried Aniyah found her stash or if it was because Papu Syris gave her too much candy.

“Papu! Papu gave it to me. He said I got some because I’m a pretty girl.” Aniyah explained with her whole face, throwing those hands in the air again and making my heart skip. She was a little dare devil like her mother, and it was going to give me a heart attack.

Rayla glared at Syris, who whined, “She’s just so darn cute?! How do you expect me to keep candy in my pockets with such adorable grandchildren?” Rayla rolled her eyes. She was constantly telling us how Aniyah was playing us all, but we just ignored it.

As soon as she saw Avery, her wings fluttered fast as she yelped out, “Papa! Papa! Give me a hug and kiss!” She wiggled her butt, and Syris took her down off his shoulders with a disappointing sigh. She went running into Avery’s arms, throwing her arms around him, and he closed his eyes tight, basking in her glorious glow of happiness.

“Oh, man, Aniyah, you give the best hugs! How did you get so good?” He snuggled with her for a second before she pulled away.

“That’s because I practice, Papa. I give all the hugs to all the boys.” The whole room went quiet, the men outweighing the women as we were stunned at her words.

“What boys? Who are you talking about, lovely?” Avery’s voice was sugary sweet, and yet, clipped as his hand closed

into a fist.

A rumble came from down the hallway from Ax. “Who the hell is touching my precious daughter, I’ll kill them!” Quickly taking a scan of Falcon’s pinched mouth and Cosmo’s furrowed brows, I knew we were all on the same page. If any boy touches one of my daughters, we’ll make them pay a hundred lifetimes over.

The dungeons came to mind, thinking of new ways to make use of them since we killed off Vincent years ago, after Calix was born.

Aniyah giggled. “You’re so silly. You’re a boy, and Father’s a boy, and Daddy, Dad, and Apá are boys. Plus Tata, Papu, Grandpa, and Pops. They *all* are boys. There are so many boys in this house all the time.”

Oh, fuck. We’re going to have to watch out for that one. She knows when and how to turn on the charm, and now she knows it works much easier on men than women. She was diabolical. Her magic hasn’t bloomed just yet, but I bet as soon as she got some of that fairy allure, she was going to be vexing.

I looked around the room at a house full of laughter and noises, and I sighed. Ternin and Syris were currently fighting over who got to play with Aniyah next, as she kept telling them what each other has done for her today. Ax found Nova in Manic’s arms, growling at his father for being an enabler. Falcon and Avery were talking about some Syndicate business, Cosmo asked Calix about his mechanical spider, which made Calix excited as he told him how he made it. Rayla was mentoring Erza about the best way to take out a revenge plan, and Riot was still standing in the shadows, cataloging it all.

This was home, where I belonged.

After years of feeling alone, I finally found my family. Found my reason for being. My circle of people I cared about were all in this room. Fuck everyone else. They were all expendable.

While we all might be a little unorthodox, a little unstable, we were a family that would do anything for each other. I finally understood Rayla's devotion. We were the Syndicate. Strong and unstoppable.

And if you got in our way, be prepared for us to make a bloody mess.

AUTHORS NOTE

*Wow! This has been a wild ride and I have loved every second of it. When these characters came alive in my head, I knew that I was going to fall in love with all of them. When I started *Syndicate Princess* and *Syndicate Queen*, I truly didn't have a plan after that. I was planning on that being that, but between readers demanding for more, and my own characters saying they had more to tell, I just had to make this book.*

I will say this will NOT be the end of the Syndicate. My plan is to make 2025 the year of the Syndicate children! That's right! Calix, Ezra, Nova, Riot and Aniyah are all going to get their own standalones! I'm super excited because I had already made plots for each book and already figured out love interests. Best part is that you will get to see Rayla, the guys, and the dads again! This time, all of them will be meddling in their children's & grandchildren's lives! Mmmuuuuuaahhh! I don't know why I like to torture them like this, but I so do!

I want to give a HUGE thank you to some pretty special people that have been so helpful and have not let me give up when it was getting hard. Cristina & Laerke... you both have been SO helpful and supportive... I will always be thankful for you being in my life!

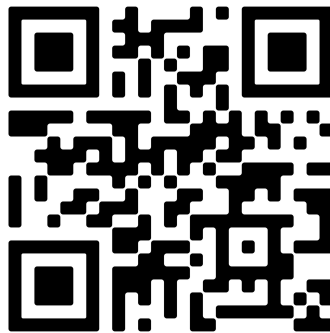
As always, happy reading and thank you ALL for your support!

Kira Stanley



Kira Stanley lives in Arizona with her husband and two little monster children. She graduated ASU with a degree in Fine Arts, so she is always interested in anything that creative. When she is not taking care of kids, or working her fulltime day job, she is enjoying TV and movies to the fullest, quoting every line that can fit into her daily life. She loves strong women, funny characters, psychotically devoted men and a whole lot of story between the pages.

Want to keep up with what Kira is doing??? Follow Her!



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